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THE

CHRISTIAN PROFESSION:

A SERIES OF

LETTERS TO A FRIEND,

ON THE

NATURE, DUTIES, NECESSITY, TRIALS AND SUPPORTS
OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

BY

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CINCINNATI:
MOORE, WILSTACH, KEYS & CO.,
25 WEST FOURTH STREET.
1855.

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CINCINNATI.

PREFACE.

The Author has long felt the need of a Manual, presenting briefly and together, the points treated of in this little volume, to be put into the hands of young persons and others standing at the threshold of the Church, and likewise into the hands of Church members, as occasion may require. Those excellent works which have been written on different parts of the subject—some covering more, and some less of the whole ground—such as Jay's Christian Contemplated, and James's True Christian, Christian Professor and Christian Duty, do not just meet the want, which a Manual of this kind is designed to meet. On the other hand, a small work of this character, may serve to turn attention to those works, in which different points on the same. or

kindred subjects, are more largely discussed. It is sent forth as an humble laborer with those admirable works, not at all pretending to take rank with them, but desiring to contribute its mite to the same cause—to the glory of our common Lord; to whose favor and blessing it is humbly commended.

Oxford, Ohio, *August* 1, 1854.

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LETTERS

ON THE

CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

My Dear Friend:—

There was a time when it was fashionable to deny the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and to sneer at the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ as a cheat. Then you might have heard the would-be philosopher, and the young man, who wished to be considered wiser than other people and a man of spirit, affecting to laugh at the credulity and weakness of Christians. Happily this age has in a great measure gone by. There

is a great deal of infidelity in the world, and of iate years it seems to be again on the increase; but it has, for the most part, to keep itself masked. The Bible has triumphed, time and again, over the open attacks of its enemies, and demonstrated its claims to the faith and obedience of all men, as the sure and infallible word of the Living God. With a few extreme exceptions, all classes profess to revere the Scriptures, and any open disrespect to them is regarded as a mark of ignorance and vulgarity, or reckless hostility to what is good. Few men, who wish to pass for respectable men, dare to avow their infidelity. It is felt, that such an avowal would expose a man at once to suspicion, pity and contempt; hence none make it, but the recklessly depraved. All others regard themselves, and wish to be regarded, as Christians — in theory, at least, if not in practice; and most men would feel insulted to be called anything else. The Scriptures are even wrested to support some of the very worst forms of infidelity.

But while it is fashionable to call the Bible the word of God, and to count Jesus Christ the

Saviour of the world, and His religion divine, it is very common for ungodly men to denounce the Church, the Gospel-ministry, and the Christian profession. And it can scarcely have escaped your notice, that there is, especially among young men and business men, not only a prevailing indifference, but a prejudice, against making and maintaining a Christian profession. It is, in many quarters, come to be considered rather unmanly. It is regarded as something becoming enough for the weaker sex, and for the sickly, the hypochondriacal, the aged, and those drawing near the tomb, but unworthy the attention of the young man of spirit, or the vigorous aspirant for the honors and emoluments of life. The Christian profession is regarded as a gloomy thing, full of discomfort and destitute of joy. When a man joins the Church, he is looked upon by many as signing away his liberty, and becoming, in some degree, unfitted for the business and enjoyments of life. Professors of religion are often indiscriminately called hypocrites, and it is a saying current in the mouths of many, That a man can be as good a Christian out of

the Church as in it. The necessity and importance of the Christian profession are certainly not duly felt, and its duties and advantages are neither understood nor considered.

Perhaps, my young friend, you are living where such sentiments as these are entertained, and may yourself be a subject of this indifference, and of these prejudices; and it may be, that withal, you are contenting yourself with the hope that you are a Christian, and that it will in the end be well with you, though you are not a professor of religion. If this is your case, you are in a very unsafe condition. You are living in disobedience to the most explicit injunctions of the Redeemer, and in neglect of his appointed means of grace. In refusing to join his church, and profess his name, and walk by the laws he has given his disciples, you are not acting the part of a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ, but more like an enemy; and his enemies know how to claim you. You are robbing Christ of his due honor, and your own soul of much good; and it may be ill — sadly ill — with you in the end.

Or, you may be delaying to make a profession for the present, purposing to do it after a while; and this may have been the case with you for years; and you may just now be as little inclined to own Christ and take his yoke upon you, and bear it, as you have ever been. With your delay, your difficulties increase, rather than disappear; and instead of an increasing interest, you experience a growing indifference. If this is your condition, your soul is in danger. Whatever you intend to do, you are, for the present, disobeying Christ, and risking your eternal all. You know not what instant death may surprise you in this state; and should you be spared even to old age, the prospect of your doing better is becoming darker and darker, every day you delay; and when you come to be an old man, should you live to be an old man, you run a great risk of being like many other old men in our land, a mere worldling — a cold respecter of religion — an unfeeling hearer of the Gospel — or, a hardened scoffer.

In either case, you need, forthwith, to take the subject of the Christian profession into serious

consideration. Remember, that as with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, so with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation. Remember, that *now* is the accepted time, and that *to-day* is the day of salvation. And whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. Summons your utmost energies, when the interests of eternity are at stake. Hearken to the voice of Jesus! He calls to YOU. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Possibly you may have made up your mind to join the Church, or may already be a professing member, and yet have never duly considered the nature, importance, duties and obligations, or the trials and supports of the Christian profession. In many places, it is fashionable to make a profession of religion. In such places, many join the Church without thinking much about it. It is expected of them to join when they come to a certain age, and it would be odd in them not to belong. It would be gratifying to their parents and friends for them to join.

It will add to their respectability, and be to their interest. It is also desirable to have one's children baptized; and when a man comes to die, it will be comforting to reflect that he belongs to the Church, and that he has received the sacrament. And then, all that will be required, is some knowledge of religion; a decent respect for its institutions; a life free from vice; to keep the Sabbath, and go to meeting, and give a trifle to the support of the gospel; and should one have a family, perhaps to keep up family worship, and teach the children the catechism; and the way these things are attended to, it will be no difficult matter to satisfy the Church, provided you join it. It is to be feared, that thousands join the Church, who look at the matter about in this light, and consider nothing more. Such certainly need to take a new view of the subject; and should the reader of this friendly letter belong to this class, I would say to him, My Friend, beware, lest while you have a name to live, you be yet dead. Take heed, that you be not traveling down to hell with a lie in your right hand. The kingdom of God is

not a mere form, but a living, heartfelt reality; it is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost—not in word, but in power. With all your profession and forms, Jesus Christ may at last say to you, Depart from me; I never knew you.

There is a great deal of loose profession, and a great deal of loose walking in the Christian profession. Jesus Christ is sorely wounded in His own house, and by his professed friends. Custom, instead of the law of Christ, seems to be the standard. Conscience, with many, has very little to do in the matter. There is not that manifest difference, which should exist, between the professed followers of Christ and the people of the world. The Church is too much like the world, and everything in her is reduced too much to a worldly standard. Instead of church-members acting in such a manner that the world shall be constrained to take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, and have learned of him, and become imitators of him; instead of being living epistles of recommendation in favor of the truth, excellence and

power of the Christian religion, their imperfections too often throw stumbling-blocks in the way of persons even not wholly destitute of seriousness, while they give occasion to the openly ungodly to blaspheme.

It is evident, that the nature and duties of the Christian profession should be more studied by church-members themselves. To any serious-minded Christian, the thought that he may, by his *un-Christ-like* conduct, have proved a stumbling-block to the inquirer, or given a handle to the scoffer, will be painfully distressing. And, my Christian friend, may you not well entertain the question, whether you have been guilty in this matter? And with this question before you, may you not well take a review of your life, and a survey of your duties as a professing member of the Church?

In view of the considerations suggested in these remarks, I propose, in a series of Letters, to submit to your candid reflection, a few thoughts on the *nature, duties, importance and necessity, peculiar trials, supports and consolations of the Christian profession.* I wish to write as a friend,

seeking at once your highest good, and the glory of Christ; and you are, for your own sake and for the love of Christ, earnestly entreated to read prayerfully, in the fear of God. Soon we shall both appear before his judgment-seat, and give in our account respecting the matters treated of in these Letters.

Yours,

——

LETTER II.

THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

My Dear Friend:—

I wish, in this letter, to call your attention to the *nature* of the Christian Profession. It is often in the Scriptures called, *confessing Christ before men:*—"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God."—Luke xii, 8. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation."—Rom. x, 9, 10. Jesus Christ, the Eter-

nal Son of God in our nature, having died for us and risen again, and being by the right hand of God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins, and having called us by his grace unto fellowship with himself as heirs of life eternal, calls upon us to profess our faith in him, and our love and obedience to him, and publicly and openly to espouse his cause, service and glory, in this ungodly world.

The state of matters is just this:—Our world has apostatized from God, and the human race is a race of rebels and enemies against him; all have sinned and all are living in sin. The whole world lieth in wickedness; ungodliness is popular; men revel, delight and glory, in that which is both their ruin and shame. As sinners, they are, in the righteous judgment of God, condemned to endless perdition; and they are so utterly debased as to be wholly incapable of loving God, and of enjoyment in his presence or service. They are irreconcilably averse to their true dignity and interests, as rational and immortal beings, and to the great end of their

being, which is to glorify and enjoy God forever. They are the subjects of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. They need an atonement for their sin, but they can not effect it. They need a change of heart, but they can not work it. They are without strength, dead in trespasses and sins, and everlasting destruction is before them.—Rom. ii, 8, 9; 2d Thess. i, 8, 9, with Eph. ii, 1, 3. Now, Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, the Creator and Upholder of all worlds, whom all the angels of God worship, has come into the world that sinners of our fallen race might have life, and that they might have it abundantly. Himself the True and Living God, he yet became man, assumed the responsibilities of sinful men to the broken law and offended justice of God, and obeyed and died in their room. He loved us and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. By this means, he purchased pardon, and obtained the Spirit of life and holiness,

by whose agency the life of God is restored in the souls of sinners, by nature spiritually dead. Thus he becomes the author of eternal salvation. Remission of sins, spiritual life, and everlasting favor and blessedness with God are provided and secured in his name and by the merit of his surety, obedience, and expiatory death.

These things are proclaimed in the Gospel as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ—they are proclaimed and offered to all—and they actually accrue to all those who believe; that is, to all who simply and truly accept them as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now in confessing Christ before men, we make a public declaration, that we do own and acknowledge Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of God, who became man and died for sinners, to satisfy Divine Justice for their sins, and reconcile them to God, as *the* Saviour, and the *only* Saviour of sinners, and that we do take him as *our* Saviour, and love and honor him as such. He is the Apostle and High-Priest of *our profession*. We avow our faith in all that he is, and in all that he has done, and in all that he reveals as a Saviour.

We proclaim our belief in his doctrines and our dependence on his work, and profess before all men, and call upon men to bear witness, that we take Jesus Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith, and that we build our eternal hopes on what he hath done and suffered, and on what he continues to work by his Spirit and grace; and that we have no other hope.

We come out from the world, and proclaim ourselves on his side. We leave the rank and file of his enemies, and join in the ranks of his friends and followers. We publicly engage to be the Lord's, and solemnly protest that we belong to him, and bind ourselves by solemn covenant to be his, and to love his name and serve him.—Is. xliv, 5; lvi, 6. We espouse openly his cause. He was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil, and to establish a kingdom in righteousness and truth; and in this his great work and undertaking, we enlist in his service and addict ourselves to his interests. We then, in this profession engage to make common cause with him against all error, and wickedness, and ungodliness; against all immo-

rality and vice; against all that is derogatory to the glory and government of God, or the good of man; against all that is incompatible with the teachings, the spirit or object of that Gospel which proclaims, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will toward men."

We also avow Christ to be our Lawgiver and our King, as head of his Church, and head over all things to his Church; as having a peculiar right to reign over and control us. We take his yoke upon us, and engage to submit to his government; to make his will our law, and his Word our rule of conduct; to abide by his statutes, and walk in his commandments and ordinances. Every professor of religion is professedly "under law to Christ." Christ will own no man as his disciple, who obeys not the command, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;" who does not submit his will to that of the Saviour, inquiring with the humility and obedience of a loyal and loving subject, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?"

Now, in this confession, or profession, we testify against, and condemn the sin and apostasy

of the world; we renounce sin, and the sinful courses and erroneous principles of the world; own subjection and swear allegiance to God, and avow our determination to lead a religious and holy life. All this operates as a rebuke upon all those who continue to live in sin and in the rejection of Christ, and upon all who do not take the same open stand which we do. Hence this profession, if consistent and decided, will expose those who make it to the hatred of the world, and to reproach and persecution, more or less open and violent, according to the circumstances of the age in which they live. Of this our Saviour gave his disciples and all who heard him, full and repeated warning: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." It is perfectly natural, and therefore a thing to be expected, that the ungodly should transfer their hatred of God and his Christ, to his friends, who bear his image and have espoused his cause.

Other professions may be popular, but an alienated world hates the Christian profession; and every one making it should lay out his accounts to meet with indications of this hatred. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Hence moral courage—that moral courage which proceeds from faith in God and love to Christ—is necessary in order to make and maintain this profession.

This profession is a *confession*. In making it, the followers of the Redeemer confess that, of which men naturally are ashamed, and own to that which men glory in denying. There is really nothing of which the unrenewed heart is so prone to be ashamed, as it is of a vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not only Jews, and Pagans, and Mahometans, and Infidels, that deny Christ, but *nominal Christians;* carnal men, who admit that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners, and who would wish to be called Christians, and not Pagans or Infidels. How many such are, nevertheless, ashamed of Him as *their* Saviour, as that One whom they personally honor with a spiritual and penitent

reliance, love and obedience; and they take good care to show, that, in this sense they are not his followers; and often, even delight, in one way or other, to annoy and vex those who are.

In the Christian Profession, a man professes his faith in the doctrine of Christ—his acceptance of his salvation—his willingness to obey his commands—and his enlistment in his cause.

The Visible Church is a society composed of those who make this profession. It is the will of the Saviour, that his friends be united and bound together in one organized society, placed under certain laws and regulations, and furnished with peculiar institutions; all adapted to promote the growth, prosperity and efficiency of the society. This is a most wise arrangement, founded in the social nature of man, and in harmony with the whole social system on our earth. The friends of Jesus, thus associated, will lend mutual aid and support. Each one will be benefited by the arrangement, and will be the means of benefiting his brethren. They all need, and will all be the better of, favorable social influences. The several institutions of

this society, too, are, like all the institutions of Heaven, admirably adapted to draw out these influences, and bring them to bear in fullest measure; while they serve to concentrate, direct and invigorate the energies of the Redeemer's friends, and thereby render his cause successfully aggressive in our world.

This society — the Church — holds a prominent place in the Scriptures, where it passes under different names, such as *the house of God; the household of faith; the church of the Living God; the pillar and ground of the truth; the fold of Christ; the commonwealth of Israel; the kingdom of God; the kingdom of Heaven; the body of Christ*, etc., etc. Everywhere in the sacred page, it stands out to our view as having a prominent, intimate and vital connection with the religion of Christ, and its perpetuity and spread in the world; as the preserver of the truth and ordinances of the Redeemer; as the propagator of his salvation; as the asylum of sinners from the ungodly influences of the world, and from sin and wrath; and as the seminary of saints, where they are trained and educated for heaven.

Among the numerous notices of this society, which appear in the Word of God, I transcribe, for your perusal, the following: "There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body; so also is Christ; for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore, he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men, And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.

unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we be henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love."—Eph. iv, 1–16; Cor. xii, 12, 13.

It is abundantly plain from these, and from similar passages which might be quoted, that the Church is a society founded and organized by Christ — that it is to be composed exclusively of the avowed friends of the Redeemer—that the design of the organization is the perfecting of its members and the enlargement of their number—and that, for this purpose, it is made the depository of the doctrines and ordinances of Christ, which it is to preserve, and which it is to keep in vigorous application;—and all this, in

order that it may be the great instrumental agency, by means of which the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be maintained and propagated, and his salvation extended to the ends of the earth.

Hence it follows, that all true friends of Christ will seek to be connected with this society; and that the Christian Profession can not be made in any other way, than by joining this society. Hence, we read, "That the Lord *added to the Church* daily, such as should be saved;" or, as it might be rendered more literally, "the saved;" *i. e.* The Lord added to the Church all those who became subjects of saving grace; daily and every day, as men became subjects of the Redeemer's saving power, they joined the Church. It was by doing this, that they complied with the exhortation, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." It is only by joining the Church, that a man can give the proper public declaration, that he believes the doctrine of Christ, accepts his salvation, espouses his cause, and means to wear his yoke. Hence every man who

would pass for a Christian, must belong to some branch, or other, of the Church of God.

There are two commands of our Saviour, obedience to which seals a man's profession, and the observance of both of which is inseparable from church-membership. They are, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. The same authority which says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and, "Repent of your sins," also says, "Be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus," and, "Eat,"—"Drink,"—"This do in remembrance of me." And the heart that truly believes and repents, obeys; and the law of Christ knows no way of professing this faith and repentance, but by obedience to these commands; and obedience to them implies church-membership. You can not be a professor of the religion of Jesus, without being baptized, and partaking of the supper of the Lord; and this you can not do, without profaning these ordinances, unless you are a member of the Church.

Yours,

——.

LETTER III.

THE DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

Christians a peculiar people — Their peculiar character grows out of the Gospel as a scheme of mercy — Motives.

My Dear Friend: —

Let me now invite your attention to the duties of the Christian profession. Christians are, by their profession, a peculiar people; they are not of the world, but have come out from it, and are separate; they are called "saints;" "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling;" "children of the light and of the day, not of the night, nor of darkness;" "the children and family of God;" "the household of faith;" "the Church of the Living God;" "the body of Christ;" "the kingdom of heaven;"

"the commonwealth of Israel;" and are distinguished by other equally peculiar and striking names and titles. They are also appointed to be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth;" "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light." From the nature of their profession — from their relations to God, to the Redeemer, and to the world — it is evident that they occupy a most responsible position, and that their profession involves peculiar duties.

The duties of this profession are set forth in the New Testament, especially in the epistles of Paul, with an unction and warmth of affection admirably suited to impress the mind and enlist the heart. One thing especially worthy of attention, is, that these duties are there presented as growing out of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ; and are enforced upon us by the considerations of the Saviour's love, and bound upon us by the obligations of his grace. They are urged upon us, not that

we may thereby merit divine acceptance, or earn a price to purchase heaven; but the Christian professor is regarded as already accepted in Christ Jesus, and an heir of heaven through his righteousness; and he is called upon to perform these duties from a grateful sense of his obligations to that Saviour, who loved him and gave himself for him — who died for him and rose again: to perform them on the principle which David expressed when he said, "Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes, and I have walked in thy truth;" again, when he exclaimed, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" and, again, when he went forth in thanksgiving: "I will praise thee, O Lord, with all my heart, and I will glorify thy name forevermore: for great is thy mercy toward me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

Thus when Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, calls the attention of the Christians of that city to the duties of their profession, it is not till after he has placed before them an exhibition of God's rich, sovereign, and abounding grace

in their salvation; and then he begins in the following strain: — "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." So in his epistles to the Corinthians: — "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the Living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore,

come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Rom. xii, 1 – 2; 1 Cor. vi, 19 – 20; and 2 Cor. vi, 14 – 18.

In like manner, in his epistle to the Ephesians, he first directs attention to the unanswerable riches of God's grace in Christ — to the great love wherewith he loved us, a love exceeding all dimensions, and passing knowledge — and then proceeds to urge the duties of the Christian Profession, in the following language:—"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." "I, *therefore*," — that is, in view of the unspeakable love of God which I have endeavored to set before you, — "beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."—Eph. iv, 1.

Let us, my friend, consider a moment how this appeal would present itself to the minds of the Christians at Ephesus. They are addressed as Christians and members of the Church of Christ, living in the midst of the idolatrous and the ungodly. The vocation wherewith they were called, and of which they are exhorted to walk worthy, is the vocation or calling of the Gospel. Like their gentile neighbors, they had been ignorant of the true God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. They had walked as other gentiles walked, in the vanity of their mind — having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts — and had had their conversation in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, being in all respects children of wrath, even as others; as deeply sunk in ignorance and idolatry, as basely and

as wretchedly enslaved to the world, the devil, and the flesh. But God had called them by his grace. While their neighbors, acquaintances, and near friends, still lived on in darkness and sin, they had been called into God's marvelous light. They had learned the love of God in Christ Jesus — had experienced his life-giving grace — had tasted the sweetness of pardoning mercy through the blood of redemption — had been made accepted in the Beloved, and had been taught to hope for the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Such was their calling. What a stupendous change had they undergone! What a gulf separated them from their heathen neighbors! How deeply indebted were they to the love and sovereign grace of God! What duties, what obligations, rested on them as Christians, and as members of the church of Christ, professing to be called with this high, holy, and heavenly calling! And how would the appeal come home to their hearts: WALK WORTHY OF THE VOCATION WHEREWITH YOU ARE CALLED.

Owing to the fact that the Gospel has by a

general influence elevated society, and purified morals in Christian lands, the change which a man undergoes in becoming a Christian, and the difference between the Christian profession and the world, are not now so striking, but still they are radically and essentially the same as they were when the Apostle wrote. The Christian is still as deeply indebted to the unsearchable riches of grace; the pit from which he has been delivered, is just as deep and fearful; the benefits conferred are just as great, and they have been procured at the same cost—the sacrifice of the Son of God. The language addressed to the Christian then, may, with the utmost propriety, be addressed to the Christian now: "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off

concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Christians are still by their profession, a peculiar people, sustaining peculiar relations, under peculiar obligations, and having peculiar duties. Of these duties I shall endeavor to present an outline in my next. In the meantime, let me ask you to read prayerfully the twelfth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of his epistle to the Ephesians. And may God bless the reading to your soul.

Yours,

LETTER IV.

INTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS.

[The Duties of the Christian Profession, Continued.]

My Dear Friend:—

I propose in this, and one or two subsequent Letters, to give you an outline of the duties of the Christian Profession. I say an outline—for nothing more on a subject so comprehensive can be attempted in the space of a few short Letters:

I. The first duty, that which lies at the foundation of this whole profession, is *to cherish in your own heart the principles which make the genuine Christian to differ from all other men.* These principles are:

1. The saving and heart-affecting knowledge

of the true God, and his Son Jesus Christ. This implies the knowledge of ourselves as rational, immortal and accountable creatures, as sinners, and as sinners favored with a provision of mercy; the knowledge, too, of the law of God in its extent, and spirituality, and sanctions; and the knowledge of the way of salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is an opinion very prevalent, that our doctrinal views are of little moment, provided only we are sincere. Accordingly, many set very little store by the knowledge of religious truth—and, practically, it is not cultivated. This is a most dangerous fallacy. As rational agents we must act under *motives*, and these are supplied in the *facts* of religion—of which facts the *doctrines* of religion are but the statement. How can we love God or the Saviour, or render an intelligent service, with appropriate sentiments of love and gratitude and godly fear, if we know not God in his glorious attributes and gracious purposes, or are ignorant of the Saviour in his character, offices, sufferings and work? On this subject the Scriptures are very

explicit: "This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The truth as it is in Jesus is the means by which God sanctifies men, and fits them for his service on earth, and for happiness above. Hence the prayer of the Saviour—"Sanctify them through thy truth." The apostle Peter teaches us, that if we would grow in grace, we must grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But we should aim at more than a speculative knowledge—a knowledge, which puffeth up—we should seek that realizing, heartfelt knowledge of divine things, in consequence of which the things of God shall take possession of our souls, and the truths of his Word become habitually controlling principles of action. It will avail us nothing to have our heads full of religious notions, if our hearts are not established with grace. Nay, it will only add to our condemnation: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

2. True faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. This

is more than a mere assent to the doctrines of Christ, or to the doctrines taught in the Word concerning Christ. It is a taking of him as offered in the Gospel, as our *own* Saviour; and it implies a renunciation of all dependence on self, on either our own wisdom, or our own righteousness, or our own strength; a deep feeling of our own weakness, guilt and depravity; and an exclusive, humble and thankful reliance on the righteousness and grace of Jesus Christ, taking God at his word, in the offer which he makes of Christ to us, and willing to be saved in the Gospel way—that is, saved from our sins, and purely by grace.

3. Genuine repentance for sin. Here the soul sees (particularly as exhibited in the sufferings of Christ), the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its hatefulness and danger, and hates it; and earnestly longs to be cleansed from its pollution and freed from its power. It is not taken up with abstract views of sin, but is deeply affected with a sense of its own sins, and likewise of its own sinfulness; and is humbled, rendered broken and contrite, so that it turns away from

all sin with grief, abhorrence, and disgust. This state of mind is incompatible with the reservation of any known sin, or of any known neglect of duty. No true penitent will regard sin, in any of its numerous forms, in his heart. On the contrary, his prayer will be, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. Order my steps aright in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

4. Love to God and to the Saviour. A supreme esteem of, and delight in his excellence and glory, as a being absolutely holy and perfect; a grateful sense of his kindness to us in creating and preserving us, surrounding us with so many comforts and mercies, and above all in providing salvation for us through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ; a deep feeling of the obligations resting on us on account of these

favors, and an humble readiness and fervent desire to serve and glorify our Lord and Saviour with all our powers, and to the greatest possible extent.

5. A spirit of universal benevolence — of true love to mankind, and especially a desire for the salvation of the souls of men. The true Christian is taught by experience the worth of the soul, and he knows that its redemption is precious. The law of the second table, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, is written on his heart. He knows the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich; and he knows that the same mind should be in him which was also in Christ Jesus. A principle of self-denying benevolence, especially such as sets a high valuation on the souls of men, and prompts to labor for their salvation, is pre-eminently a *Christ-like* principle; the appropriate effect of true faith in his Gospel, not only recommended by his example, but enforced by the love of God to us, and natively growing out of love to God in us.

6. The love of the brethren: that is, the love of all who give evidence that they belong to Christ. It is the love of men for Christ's sake, and on account of their relation to Christ; as objects of his redeeming love, subjects of his grace, partakers of his image and spirit, members of his family, and heirs of his salvation. The Christian regards and loves all such, as brethren; as members of the same spiritual family, and heirs of the same hope, and cherishing the same interests and affections with himself. "If we love him that begat, we will also love him that is begotten of Him." "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples;—if ye love one another." If it be unnatural for those who are united in one family by the perishing ties of earth, not to love one another; much more for those who are indissolubly united in the family of God, by the sacred and imperishable ties of grace, not to love one another. "Seeing ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another, with a pure heart fervently: being

born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

7. A spirit of identification with Christ. With a feeling of oneness with him as our representative in law, and as our source of spiritual influences, there should also be a cherished identification with him in cause, interest and object. Having bought us with his blood—being our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption—being our forerunner, who has entered into heaven and taken possession of it for us—and being about to come and receive us to himself, that, where he is, there we may be also; we assuredly should feel that we belong to him, and should make common cause with him against all that is evil, and goes to support the kingdom of darkness, and in favor of that kingdom which it is his great work to set up in the world. This feeling of identification with Christ is admirably expressed by the apostle in his epistle to the Galatians: "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God; I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I

but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Finally—Connected with these principles, I would mention one more, namely, a fixing of the heart on heavenly things. Men of the world have their part or portion here; the love of the world is their ruling affection; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life their reigning desires. It is otherwise with the Christian. He is risen with Christ, and has been taught to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. God is his portion, and heaven his inheritance and home. He is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God; and, when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he also appear with him in glory. To this he looks forward with earnest expectation and hope, as the grand conclusion of all the joys and sorrows, the temptations, labors, and conflicts of this present life. Hence the Christian is described as "looking for Christ," as "loving his appearing," as "looking for that

blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself."

These, my Friend, are vital principles in Christian character, and lie at the foundation of all that is either peculiar or excellent in the Christian Profession. Without these, the performance of Christian duties is but a formal service — a body without a soul. Without these principles, though a man may keep up such a form of religion as will pass him for a decent professor, he will not show that power and spirit of godliness which impart a character of life to all that the Christian does; and adorn and recommend the gospel he can not, as one who is really a partaker of this holy calling. In all

his religious performances, he is evidently not in his element. Some unworthy considerations may stimulate him in some duties—in some things he may display a burning zeal—but in that whole range of duty which makes up the sum total of a Christian walk and conversation, he drags heavily; and in many things, chiefly in those which specially characterize the Christian, he is totally defective.

I have spent so much time, my Friend, on these inward principles of the Christian life, that I shall have to defer till my next, what I have to say on the outward duties of this profession. Ponder, in the fear of God, what I have written; and oh! consider what a blessed thing it is to be a Christian.

Yours,

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LETTER V.

PUNCTUAL OBSERVANCE OF GOSPEL INSTITUTIONS; THE PRACTICE OF THE SOCIAL VIRTUES.

(The Duties of the Christian Profession, Continued.)

My Dear Friend:—

In my last, I stated that the first and fundamental duty of the Christian Profession is, to cherish those inward principles which make the true Christian to differ from all other men. And of these I took occasion to specify as of vital importance in Christian character, 1. The true and saving knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. 2. A living and appropriating faith of the Saviour. 3. Godly sorrow for, and hatred of sin. 4. Love to God and to the Saviour. 5. A spirit of universal benevolence.

6. A spirit of identification with Christ. 7. A fixing of the heart on heavenly things. Without these, the Christian Profession would be like the body without the spirit, dead. I now ask your attention:

II. In the second place, to the OUTWARD DUTIES of this profession. The things which I have named belong to the hidden man of the heart, and, although they show themselves by their fruits, are in themselves discernible only to the eye of the omniscient Searcher of the heart, and to our own consciousness; but what remains to be named, lies open, more or less, to human observation.

1. Every professing Christian binds himself to *the devout, regular* and *punctual observance of all the institutions of the Gospel.* When a man joins the Church, he takes upon him the yoke of Christ, and engages to walk in his ordinances and commandments. In the great commission to his ministers, they are instructed to receive men into his Church on no other condition than that of implicit subjection to his will: "Go teach (or make disciples of) all nations; baptizing

them, (that is, those who become disciples,) teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you." When a professor of religion is known to neglect the daily reading of the Scriptures—or to be irregular in his attendance on the preached Gospel, and fruitful in excuses for absence—when he is noticed to be often absent from the house of God on sacramental occasions, or absent at all other times, and present only on such occasions—when he forsakes the prayer-meeting—when he is known to live without prayer in his family, or to be irregular, hurried and formal in the duty of family worship—when there is reason to suspect that he and his closet are strangers—or when he is careless and irreverent on the Sabbath, or negligent as to the Godly training of his children; when a professor is known to be negligent in any of these duties, the world judges that he is not what he professes to be—his brethren lose confidence in him, and all agree that there is something radically wrong in that man.

And so there is. These are all plain duties. The law of Christ prescribing them, speaks in

terms too plain to be misunderstood. It is not a debatable matter, whether these are duties or not; and the man who neglects any one of them willfully, in that particular casts off the authority of Jesus Christ — in his heart renounces his allegiance to the Saviour. And the very spirit which leads him to do so in one duty, would, if circumstances favored, lead him to do so in all duties. He that keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all; for the whole authority of God goes to sustain every single precept of his law, and when that precept is disregarded, that authority is disregarded.

Great is the deceitfulness of the human heart. Men may bring themselves to doubt the plainest duties, and at last to conceit that it is no sin to neglect them. Thus, on the subjects of the sanctification of the Sabbath, of family worship, social worship, and secret prayer — duties so much neglected by professing Christians — we have the clearest intimations of the Divine will.

Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy, is a law found in the very center of the decalogue,

and never repealed. It is written too on the heart of every Christian. Prophecy foretold that the sons of the stranger that should join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, would, every one, keep the Sabbath from polluting it, just as certainly as they would lay hold on God's covenant. And experience verifies prophecy. Where is the spiritually-minded Christian, that does not turn away his foot from the Sabbath, from doing his pleasure on God's holy day — that does not in his heart call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable — and that does not on that day honor God — not doing his own ways, nor finding his own pleasure, nor speaking his own words — and if he should at any time be betrayed into worldly conversation or conduct, is not grieved? No man who labors to maintain a conscience void of offense toward God, will slight the Sabbath; and rarely will you find a man doubting its obligations, till the restraints of the Sabbath and its influence on society become inconvenient to him.

Though there may not be an express com-

mand, formally instituting *family worship*, yet it is clearly a christian duty. It commends itself to reason, that the family, being a corporate individual, so constituted by God — being dependent on him, and having its wants, interests, mercies, sins, trials and afflictions as a body — should, in its corporate capacity, own its dependence on God, acknowledge his mercies, confess its sins, implore divine forgiveness, and ask divine succors and blessings. It also commends itself to reason, that the head of the family should lead in these acknowledgments and supplications, and that he should do it in such a manner as to lead the several members of the family to a sense of their own individual obligations, dependence, unworthiness and need; so as to cultivate in every member a spirit of piety and prayer. It is because it is a duty dictated by nature and reason, that the Scriptures are not more explicit. Yet they are by no means silent. We read of the patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — that wherever they pitched their dwellings, they erected an altar to the Lord, and called on his name. It

was evidently the practice of Job; Job i, 5. It is implied in the resolution of Joshua: "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." It is also implied in David's conduct, when, after the public services connected with bringing up the ark of God, he returned to bless his house; and likewise in his resolution to "walk within his house with a perfect heart." The devout Cornelius, even before he was instructed in the Gospel, feared God with *all his house*, and prayed to God always. He certainly would not abandon the duty after he was so instructed. And more than once is the solemn truth clearly intimated, that God will pour out his fury upon the families that call not on his name. The devout Christian will delight to assemble his family around the family altar in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, and reading of the word of God; he will feel, that it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High — to show forth his loving-kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night; he will feel his heart going out to the exercise, and if, by any mis-

chance, the duty be neglected, his feelings will be those of self-condemnation and self-reproach.

No less plainly obligatory is the duty of Christians to meet together for *social conference, mutual exhortation* and *united prayer*. We are commanded "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but to exhort one another, and so much the more as the day approaches." And we have an example equivalent to a positive command — an example recorded with evidence of God's high approbation — "that those that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was kept for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name; and they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I shall make up my jewels." No professing Christian that gives evidence of living and growing piety, loves to forsake such assemblies.

And in relation to *secret prayer*, nothing can be more explicit than the command of the Saviour: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy

door, pray unto thy Father, who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." We cannot conceive of a man who adorns the Christian profession, pleading inconvenience, or anything else, as an excuse for not retiring to pray secretly to God, as a stated and regular exercise.

So much for the observance of the institutions of the Gospel. Under this head I might enlarge on other particulars, such as the daily reading and study of the Scriptures, self-examination, the regular and punctual attendance on the preaching of the Gospel, and the regular and solemn observance of the Lord's Supper, in thankful and affectionate commemoration of the Saviour's death; but these things are so plainly duties of the Christian Profession, are so expressly and pointedly commanded, are so obviously essential in the very profession of Christianity, as to cut off all need of argument or proof. No man can neglect these things, without sinning against the direct command of that Saviour whom every professing Christian solemnly engages to obey.

2. But along with the observance of Gospel institutions, every professing Christian is bound to cultivate, with special care, *the social virtues.* By these, I mean those virtues, which obtain in the intercourse of man with man—the honesties, the charities, the decencies and civilities of life. These virtues are more or less held in universal esteem, especially in civilized and enlightened society. I am not of those who assert that there is no virtue in the men of the world. Such an assertion would be false to fact. There are thousands of men who make no profession of religion, who yet scorn lying and slander; detest meanness and dishonesty; abhor drunkenness and profaneness—thousands such, who are true to their word, just, and honest, and liberal in their dealings; pure in their intercourse with society, and dignified, noble, tender, affectionate, and obliging in the various relations and walks of life. All this they owe, in a great measure at least, to the moralizing and elevating influence of the Gospel on society; an influence which the Gospel exerts on many a man who nevertheless rejects the Saviour it

reveals; an influence, however, of such importance and power, that, without it, they might have been as blood-thirsty, as unfeeling, as polluted and base, as the most degraded barbarians, or savages.

But if the Gospel has produced this effect on those who are only under its general influence, how much more should it produce it on those who are, professedly, at least, under its special, sanctifying, influence? A dishonest professor of religion—one who will defraud and take the advantage in a bargain, or who will resort to low and petty artifice to make, or save a penny; a professor of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ that will lie or conceal the truth for gain, or for the purpose of excusing or justifying himself when overtaken in a fault; a professor of religion, that will slander, backbite, or defame his neighbor; a professor that will descend to low ribaldry or obscenity, or foolish talking and jesting; or one that will sip the drunkard's glass; or one that will oppress the poor, or shut up his bowels of compassion against a fellow suffering man; a stingy, nig-

gardly, closefisted professor—one that is destitute of public spirit, and always lags in those enterprises which have for their object the melioration of the condition of mankind, the improvement of society, or the benefit of the commonwealth; the professor that is morose, unsocial, uncourteous, disobliging, churlish; the professor that is slothful in his business, and prodigal in his habits—all such are just so far breaking their Lord's commands, and dishonoroing the vocation wherewith they are called. They are defective in virtues of the very first moment to society—virtues of which society has a high esteem, and of which no man can be destitute, and be respectable, or influential.

The practice of these virtues on the part of the Christian, is especially necessary in order to recommend religion before men of the world; because these are virtues which the latter most esteem; and that religion which does not produce them in its professed subjects can not fail to be undervalued and despised. The Christian should then abound—he should stand pre-eminent—in these virtues. They are the "good

works," by which we are to silence gainsayers, and by which we may hope to lead observers to glorify our Father who is in heaven. "He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men." It is to these virtues that the Apostle exhorts Christians, when he says, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The religion of Christ urges on us even the courtesies and civilities of life. It does not profess to make us conformable to all the etiquette and formalities of refined and fashionable life, many of which are hollow and silly in the extreme; and the Christian should be plain, simple, and unaffected in his manners; but the Christian must not be boorish nor rude, but "courteous"—from real goodness of heart, he must show himself kind, social, obliging, accommodating, affable, respectful.—1 Pet. iii, 8.

But there is one important point, in which

the Christian's practice of these things must differ from that of worldly men—he must practice them from a sense of duty, from love to God and to men, and not from selfish principles. "Whatever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." It is this principle which renders all the virtues of the Christian acceptable to God—and it is the want of this principle, which renders all the virtues of the man of the world condemnable before him. With the searching eye of his omniscience, he looks through the fair exterior into the heart, and disgusted with the condition of things there, exclaims, "I know you that the love of God is not in you."

The professor of the religion of Christ should study to excel the virtue of the most finished morality—especially in the duties of justice and mercy. The Gospel, in the scheme of man's salvation, makes the brightest display of justice and benevolence; and it proposes the example of God herein, as the great pattern of Christian virtue. "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." "Be ye holy, for

the Lord your God is holy." The Christian should not only avoid, but show that he abhors that which is evil. He should not only do, but he should cleave to that which is good. He should avoid all appearance of evil. His actions should be such as to show that he loathes all wrong-doing—that iniquity is the abominable thing which he hates—that he despises what is vile—that he belongs to a peculiar people, who are zealous of good works.

Especially should the Christian excel in the duties of benevolence. The Gospel is above all things a religion of benevolence. Taking its origin in the wondrous benevolence of God, its grand design is to produce benevolence in men. Its language is, "Be ye imitators of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet-smelling savor. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he

became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Such a religion as this relaxes the rigid selfishness of the human heart; and warms, and softens, and enlarges it with the tenderest sympathies of kindness, pity, and good-will. It makes the Christian feel not only for a suffering brother in the Gospel, but for a suffering brother in the great family of man. The Christian professor that can oppress his fellow-man, that can turn aside the stranger from his rights; that can turn a deaf ear to the cause of the fatherless and widow, or to the cry of the poor; that can draw his purse-strings

close, because the sufferer does not belong to his sect or to his Church; that can adopt the maxim, "Let the Devil take care of his own poor," or who can look with apathy on the wants and the woes of those who are perishing through want of the bread of life, shows that he is a stranger to that Gospel which he professes—a stranger to its spirit, as well as a rebel to its injunctions. Christ died for the *ungodly*, he came into the world to save *sinners;* and the man who has drunk into his spirit, will learn *to do good unto all men.*

My dear friend, the professing Christian can not attach too much importance to the social virtues. If by neglecting the duties of religion, he virtually disowns allegiance to Christ, he equally belies his profession and brings special dishonor on the Saviour, if he fails in the cultivation and practice of these virtues. Here, as in everything else, he should be blameless and harmless, a child of God without rebuke, in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation, and shining as a light in the world. It is by these virtues especially, that he will, in the eyes of

the world, adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and recommend it to their favorable regards.

Let me close this long letter in the words of the apostle Peter: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Yours,

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LETTER VI.

THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

[The Duties of the Christian Profession, Continued.]

My Dear Friend:—

In my last, I endeavored to turn your attention to some of the outward duties of the Christian Profession. In the course of my remarks, two classes of these were brought briefly under review: 1. The devout, regular and punctual observance of all the institutions of the Gospel; and, 2. The pre-eminent culture of the social virtues. I shall next notice:

3. As my third particular under this head, the duty of the professed Christian to cultivate, and exhibit, a *Christian disposition.* Here it becomes him to mortify and subdue certain tem-

pers and dispositions, which are not only not disgraceful, but reputable and admired in the world; and to cultivate the contrary tempers and dispositions — tempers and dispositions, which are peculiar to the Gospel, and either underrated, or despised in the world. The Christian tempers to which I refer, are humility, meekness, self-denial, forbearance, forgiveness. These make up that character which the world counts, and affects to despise as mean-spirited, tame, and abject—the very reverse of what it admires as high-minded, full of spirit, jealous of honor, quick in resentment. But, while the Christian should cultivate true nobility of soul, and of all men be the farthest removed from what is really mean or abject, it yet behooves him to think lowly of himself—to be clothed with humility — and, in lowliness of mind, to esteem others better than himself. It behooves him to be meek, yielding and complying; to be silent and gentle under rudeness and insult; to forgive and suffer, rather than retaliate or revenge; to sue for reconciliation, instead of demanding satisfaction; to bear and forbear

with the insolence, the prejudices, and passions of those with whom he has to deal; often to deny himself for the sake of peace—always those feelings of resentment which wounded and excited nature prompts—and, not unfrequently, even his rights which he might lawfully claim. This was the character which Jesus maintained, and in which he left us an example. He was meek and lowly in heart; when he was reviled he reviled not again; and when he suffered, he threatened not. He forgave his enemies, and prayed that Heaven might forgive them.

When he began his public ministry, this was the character which he commended and blessed: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God; blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." And afterward he prescribed the terms on which alone a man could be his disciple: "If any man will come after

me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

These are virtues, in the cultivation of which chiefly, Christians would, in the judgment of the Apostles, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. For example, the Apostle Paul writing to the Christians of Ephesus, after exhorting them to walk worthy of their Christian vocation, adds immediately, by way of telling them how to do so, these words: "*With all lowliness and meekness; with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.*" And, again, shortly after, in the same chapter: "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." In another epistle, he shows what importance he attaches to these passive virtues, by writing in the following strain: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,

bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity which is the bond of perfectness, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body."

Not only in the world without, but also in the Church of God, in consequence of the imperfections, the infirmities, and the selfishness of brethren, will the professing Christian find much to annoy and excite. But let him study, and at all times set before him, the example of his meek and lowly Master, and strive to grow into his very temper and spirit. Thus even the proud world will take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus; and Zion shall be a peaceful habitation; Jerusalem a vision of peace, and there the Lord will command his blessing, even life forevermore. Unspeakable is the moral influence of a meek and quiet spirit; and incalculable would be the moral power of the Church, if such a spirit pervaded all her mem-

bers. But if professors of religion are destitute of such a spirit; if on the contrary, they are governed by worldly principles in those matters which are calculated to annoy, or to rouse resentment, or excite passion; if they are haughty, high-spirited, easily provoked, scornful, implacable, spiteful, unforgiving, unyielding, slow to reconciliation, the world, looking on, will draw one of two conclusions—either that such persons are strangers to the religion of their Master, or that that religion is a farce. Strange as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that while worldly men cherish and admire what is sometimes called pride of honor, with its accompanying resentments, they yet condemn this spirit in the Church; and any exhibition of it in professed Christians, tends to lower Christianity in their esteem. Too often, also, when evil passions are stirred in the Church, they are characterized by a violence and asperity which the moral sense of the world would condemn, even in worldly men.

In taking upon us the yoke of Christ, we should feel that it is one part, and a very prom-

inent part of our profession, to put a guard upon our own spirit—that we are, by our profession, followers, and therefore should be imitators, of Him, who was meek and lowly in heart.

Yours,

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LETTER VII.

STUDYING THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH.

[The Duties of the Christian Profession, Concluded.]

My Dear Friend:—

The next, and the last duty of the Christian Profession to which I shall direct your attention, is that of *studying the welfare of the Christian commonwealth.* Every member of the Church will do so, who is a loyal subject in the Redeemer's kingdom. The purity, the peace, and the prosperity of the Church, are objects which should be near and dear to the heart of every member. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee," is the exhortation of the inspired Psalmist, to which the heart of every loyal citizen of Jerusalem will

respond: "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces! For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee! Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."

This object is greatly promoted by the performance of the duties, and the practice of the virtues specified in my previous Letters. That Christian, who instinct with the principles, and moved by the promptings of a living faith in Christ, observes the institutions of the Gospel, is adorned with the social virtues, and cherishes a meek and quiet spirit, is the man, who most, according to his condition and relations in society, promotes the good of Zion. If we would build up the true interest of the Church, we must ourselves be living, exemplary, Christians. That man can be of little use to the cause of Christ, who does not himself deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world.

But there are some things of special importance, under this head, which deserve to be particularly noticed:

First. The exercise of brotherly love and a spirit of peace. The Apostle says: "Let us, therefore, follow after those things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." Without unity of spirit—unity of sentiment, feeling and object—in its members, the Church can not prosper. Every body must have its proper spirit, or that body will die—and with that spirit every member should be instinct, if the body is to have a healthy existence, and a vigorous growth. The common spirit of the body must so take possession of all the members, that all selfish feelings shall be effectually checked and controlled, and all individual interests merged in devotion to the common good. Tender and endearing bonds bind Christians in one; and their religion, in its very spirit and nature, imposes on them the duties of brotherly kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and preferring one another in love; and without these, the unity and spirit of the body can not be preserved. Hence the language of the Apostle: "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one

another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

They who, in their Christian profession, dwell not together in unity, and peace, and active brotherly love, walk not as becomes the Gospel—walk not worthy of their vocation—and expose themselves to the withdrawal of God's Spirit, and religion to the triumphs of infidelity. They profess to be one body and one spirit, and to be called in one hope of their calling; to have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in them all. Then should they be of one heart and one soul; and stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. And how is this to be done? Not by cherishing ambition, pride, and self-conceit—not by cold, distant, unbrotherly, unneighborly conduct—not by shyness—not by readily taking offense and indulging evil-surmisings—not by cherishing bad feelings and shunning explanation, till reconciliation becomes impossible—not by stubborn refusal to make concession, and stern, resentful demands for satisfaction; but,

by lowliness of mind, keeping down everything like vain-glory, provocation, and envy—by bearing with the infirmities of the weak—by candid and prompt confession of our faults to one another—by a friendly, tender, courteous and conciliating deportment—by free and familiar intercourse—by candid and timely, unreserved and friendly explanation. Such as these are the measures by which the members of the Church should endeavor to prevent any root of bitterness from springing up to trouble and defile them; and labor to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Second. It is essential to the prosperity and vigorous efficiency of the Church, that her doctrines and principles be explicitly avowed, and firmly maintained. To this end they should be understood by all her members, and they should hold themselves ready, on all proper occasions, to declare and defend them. If it is their duty to stand fast in one mind and with one spirit, it is in striving for the faith of the Gospel. We are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The Gospel is the wisdom

of God, and the power of God, unto salvation. It is by the truth as it is in Jesus, that the Church as a whole, and her members individually, are to grow up unto a perfect man; and it is by this truth, that she is to obtain the conquest of the world. Every member of the Church should both have his own heart established with the doctrines of grace, and be prepared, as occasions serve, to teach them to others. Too many professors of religion content themselves with low attainments in Christian knowledge; are culpably indifferent as to whether their faith stands in the wisdom of men or in the power of God; and give themselves little trouble to discriminate between truth and error. They are too willing to be children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. No church can prosper, made up of such members.

Third. Free religious conversation, is a happy means of promoting mutual confidence and love in brethren; and thereby, the life and power of religion in the Church. Christians should

not only let the word of Christ dwell in them richly, in all wisdom, but they should teach and admonish one another; they should talk together of the things of God, and should speak often one to another. They are associated in one body, that they may have a mutual sympathy; and are appointed to exercise over one another an affectionate watch and care. Hence such injunctions as the following: "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

One sad mark of a low state of religion, is the worldly conversation of its professors, and their shyness to interchange views and feelings on practical and experimental religion. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." If our hearts were in heaven, our conversation would be there. If we duly appreciated

and felt what God has done for us, we would be saying with David, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."

What are sometimes called "Class-meetings" and "Experience-meetings," have sometimes been conducted in such a manner as to foster vanity, ignorance, self-righteousness, and strife, rather than godly edifying. The workings of a deceitful heart and the reveries of an uninformed mind, and the fancies of a heated imagination, have been substituted for the "sure word of prophecy," and its plain, practical, and experimental teachings. But such things are only an abuse of an institution, which, if properly conducted, is admirably adapted to promote the edification of the Church. Well-conducted meetings for conference and prayer, in the different districts of congregations, would have a happy effect in exciting a spirit of inquiry, knowledge and piety, among the people of God. Such meetings have been kept up from of old, and Heaven has regarded them with special interest and favor. In the times of Malachi—a

day, like this, of rebuke and blasphemy, of wickedness and infidelity—they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name. Let Christians think of THE DAY to which organized infidelity, multiform error, and an overspreading worldliness are hastening the Church, and let them hearken to the Apostle: "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhort one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

Fourth. It would contribute much to the prosperity of the Church, if her members would assiduously, yet wisely, exert their influence to bring those who are without to appreciate and improve the privileges of a preached Gospel and other means of grace. Every Christian, if he is what he ought to be, has influence, which may be turned to good. It matters not what his circumstances are, if he be honest, upright, benevolent, liberal and courteous, he can not fail to have influence, and decided influence. This he

should exert for the benefit of the souls of his neighbors, and the prosperity of Zion. "No man liveth to himself." The Christian has higher interests than those of time. Nay, he is placed in the Church, not only that his own soul may be saved, but that he may serve his generation in building up the Redeemer's kingdom. The heart that is duly affected with Christ's salvation, will burn with desire to bring others to enjoy it. Thus it was with Andrew and Philip, and the woman of Samaria—John i, 40–46, and John iv, 28, 29, 39 and 40—and their success encourages exertion. Christians should never forget that they are "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." They should feel their obligation to show, by word and deed, to their friends, what great things the Lord hath done for them. Their looks, their speech, their conduct, should be such as to say, to their neighbors, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you; come thou with us and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." They should walk in wisdom toward them that are without,

endeavoring to win them to Christ; striving to this end, to bring them to the house of God, to attend the prayer-meeting, to read the Bible, to sanctify the Sabbath, to read useful works, to send their children to the Sabbath school and Bible-class, to take religious periodicals, and to cultivate an acquaintance with the movements of the Church. If the labors of a Christian should result in the conversion of but one individual; yet, what an achievement! "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Fifth. The prosperity of the Christian commonwealth is particularly promoted by properly training its children. The hope of every community is its youth. If they are not trained, the community can not prosper, nor endure. It would be a wretched policy for any commonwealth, to leave its children to grow up a race of outlaws, and depend for its future support and administration on foreigners. God says to the

Church, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth;" and he commands the heads of families to bring up their children in his nurture and admonition. They should be trained not only in religious, but, as far as circumstances will permit, in all useful knowledge. This will give them the greater influence. The children of the Church should be fitted by education to occupy commanding positions in society, and to be men of controlling influence in whatever departments of life they may be called to act.

There are reasons why Christians, instead of neglecting, should be specially careful in the education of their daughters. Female influence stands in special connection with the interests of religion. Who knows not the power of a mother's influence, or a sister's, or even that of a female friend? and were that influence directed, in all cases, by intelligence and piety, how powerfully would it tell on the formation of character, to virtue and religion? The Bible regards woman as the corner-stone of the social fabric, and directs that this corner-stone be

polished: "Our daughters, like unto corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

God recognizes the children of Christians as members of the Church along with their parents, and has given many precious promises of success to attend the efforts which parents should use to train them up for piety and usefulness. And to whose salvation should Christians be so tenderly devoted, as to that of their children? The professing Christian who neglects the education, and especially the religious education of his children, is an unnatural parent, and a disloyal citizen in the commonwealth of Israel.

Sixth. Christian professors should expend liberally of their worldly substance for the enlargement and prosperity of the Church. Not that she may shine in the splendor and decorations of worldly wealth; but that her pure and holy principles—her truth and her righteousness—may be universally extended. Too much of the Christian benevolence of the day is the contribution of "the pride of life," and therefore misapplied. If the superfluity of what is given for building and decorating splendid churches, was

devoted to the education of youth—to bringing forward and supporting missionaries, and to the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, immensely more would be done for the prosperity of Zion.

It becomes the professing Christian to set Jerusalem above his chief joy—to seek her good always, and to devise liberal things in her behalf. He should consider the promise of God in her favor, strive to have his heart affected with her wants, and ponder seriously and earnestly how he can most promote her interests. He should consider, that, with respect to what he calls his property, he is only a steward of God, bound to make that use of what he is intrusted with, which will do the most good; and that this is not done by expending it, or the greater part of it, on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, or hoarding it up as an unsanctified legacy for posterity. Better dedicate, with liberal and cheerful heart, the first-fruits to God, and then the residue will descend to posterity with God's blessing.

If the Christian believes what he professes, that the kingdom of God is supreme in its

importance, then will he seek first that kingdom and its righteousness, and trust God for a competent portion of the good things of this life. God will never forsake the righteous, nor suffer his seed to beg their bread. God loves a cheerful giver, and will show his love by his providential care: "A good man showeth favor and lendeth. Surely he shall not be moved forever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst forth with new wine." And what is more, "thy soul shall be made fat;" — "the Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life."

Finally; it is the duty of every member of the Church to pray for its enlargement, holiness, peace, and prosperity. Zion's King has decreed, that his subjects shall pray for the welfare of his kingdom; and he has promised to hear their prayers. "Prayer shall be made for Him continually." "Pray for the peace of

Jerusalem." With hearts devoted to his glory, and filled with sweet meditation on his promises in behalf of his Church, and encouraged by the signs of the times, they should pray, with unceasing importunity, Thy kingdom come. This, which is the duty of all Zion's citizens, is particularly the duty of her public officers; "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." But while it is their duty specially, yet it is an important duty of every member of the Church, and one upon the due performance of which, very much depends the prosperity of the Church. How earnestly, accordingly, does the Apostle, in almost all his epistles, entreat the prayers of his Christian brethren. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; withal praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ; that I may make

it manifest, as I ought to speak." A praying people will make a preaching minister; and where the members of the Church are prayerless, Zion cannot be expected to prosper.

Then, dear friend, let your resolution, and may that of every member of the Church, be: "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

Yours,

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LETTER VIII.

THE NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

My Dear Friend:—

Having taken a view of the nature and duties, permit me now to call your attention to the NECESSITY of the Christian Profession.

In the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, we have the following narrative, which was deemed to be of sufficient importance to be recorded by two other evangelists: — "And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment, and immediately her issue of blood stanched. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all

denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee; and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him, *before all the people*, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith had made thee whole; go in peace."

What treatment was this for the tender and compassionate Jesus, who always sympathized with the afflicted, and was a model of delicacy — the last who would needlessly wound the sensibilities of any human being; — what treatment was this for him toward a poor and afflicted woman! Yes, it was a woman — a delicate female — and one that was afflicted, and had been so for a long time: a modest and retiring female, instinctively shrinking from observation, and one whose disease was such as female delicacy would induce her to conceal!

Her faith was strong: she believed, that if she could but touch the hem of his garment, she would be whole; and, under this persuasion, she, unnoticed by the crowd, stole up among them as they thronged and pressed him, and touched — in faith and love touched — her Saviour's garment, and was cured. The omniscient eye of Jesus saw her — saw what had passed in her mind, what she had done, and the benefit she had received. He knew her affliction, her modesty, her timidity, and backwardness, and particularly her delicacy on the subject of her disorder and cure. Surely he will spare the feelings of this shrinking one, and let her bear away the happy cure unobserved. The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench; and certainly he will not wound the sensibilities of amiable modesty!—No! He sternly demands that she make her appearance, and confess publicly the whole affair; and so sternly did he insist on this demand, that she, feeling that she was under his penetrating and all-seeing eye, came trembling, and, falling down before him,

declared unto him, BEFORE ALL THE PEOPLE, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

Now, why was the Saviour so stern and unyielding? It certainly was not to display his miraculous power; for how often did he command those who were healed by him to tell no man? No! He would teach us the necessity of an open, public profession of religion:—that no one should derive saving virtue from him, and pass along unknown, undistinguished, in this world's crowd; but that every such one should come forward, in the face of all difficulties and all discouragements, and in despite of all delicacy and all reluctance, and confess publicly, before the world, for what purpose he had applied to the Saviour, and how immediately he was made whole. And the record of this transaction is given, to teach us that the Lord Jesus Christ sternly demands this, and will be satisfied with nothing less.

And this is a prominent idea throughout the New Testament. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in

thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven: Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Nothing can be plainer than these declarations. In order to be saved, you must confess the Lord Jesus with your mouth, as well as believe on him with your heart. If it is a law of his kingdom that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, it is equally a law of his kingdom that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. If you are ashamed of him, he will be ashamed of you. If you confess him, he will confess you; and if you do not confess him, he will not confess you. Your

salvation is just as truly suspended on your confessing him, as it is on your believing in him. You might as well deny the necessity of faith, as deny the necessity of confessing him. You might as well flatter yourself with the hope of safety in refusing to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, as to cherish the hope of safety in refusing to confess him. The refusal, in either case, is perdition; — it is to make yourself sure of being disowned by the Lord Jesus Christ in that awful day when he shall sit as Judge of the world.

Set it down then, my Friend, as a fundamental truth, that, by the law of Christ, a profession of faith is as truly necessary to salvation, as is faith itself. As this is a truth, which, though so plainly taught, many who claim to be friends and respecters of religion do not believe — at least, do not realize — I will endeavor to illustrate and enforce it by several considerations.

However, before doing this, there are two things which I will promise, for the purpose of preventing mistake, and also in order to remove

a confusion of ideas which paralyzes the force of the above truth in a great many minds.

And, first:—I do not say that it is absolutely impossible for a man to be saved without a profession of religion. An infant, an idiot, may be saved without faith. In such cases, faith is impracticable. And so there may be cases in which, though a man is effectually called, and believes, and repents, yet a profession of religion is impracticable. He may be arrested by death before he have the opportunity; he may be converted in a place where there is no Church, and it may be out of his power to place himself where the Church of God is; he may have conscientious difficulties, deterring him by a sense of unworthiness, which possibly may not be removed till he be called to the other world. In such cases, however, it is implied that the man has the will and desire to profess Christ, and is earnest in the use of means to remove his difficulties, and that the unperformed duty of confessing Christ, instead of being a matter of indifference, or a thing about which he makes himself easy, or in which he excuses

himself, is a habitual concern and burden upon his soul.

Second:—Not all professors of religion shall be saved. No! there are hypocrites and self-deceivers in the Church. The profession of which I treat, is the result of faith in the heart; and, consequently, sustained by the performance of the duties of the Christian profession. The profession, the necessity of which is here urged, is not merely the joining of the Church and receiving the sacraments, though these are prominent duties in it; but, in addition, it is a walking worthy of such a standing and of such privileges. It is possible for a man to confess Christ in words, by avowing a certain creed, joining a religious society, and receiving the sacraments, and yet deny him by a graceless life; — to have the form of godliness, and yet deny the power thereof. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." While, therefore, the non-professor is arraigned on the fact that he does not confess the Lord Jesus; the hypocritical or false professor is arraigned on the fact of his false profession—on the fact, that

though he professes Christ, he believes not with his heart, and is a stranger to the power of the Christian life. And, my Friend, I call on you, by the necessity of such, and only such, a profession as flows from faith in the heart, and is sustained by a corresponding life, to confess the Lord Jesus; and, if you do confess him, then to search your heart, and see on what principles and from what motives you do so, and to try your life, and see whether indeed Christ is living in you.

Now, it must be plain, that the fact that a man may be saved without a profession of religion, where such profession is impracticable, does not in the least affect the question of the necessity of such profession where it is practicable. And it is equally plain, that the worthlessness of a false profession does not in the least diminish the importance, nor impair the value and saving utility of a genuine profession. And men allow their judgments to become sophisticated, when they suffer either of these considerations to weaken their sense of

the necessity and importance of the Christian profession.

With these explanations, I will now turn your attention to some considerations, serving to illustrate and enforce the importance and necessity of this profession.

1. The first consideration which I shall offer, is derived from THE NECESSITY OF UNIVERSAL OBEDIENCE TO THE SAVIOUR. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." The whole authority of God is vested in every precept of his law. Precisely the same obligations which render the whole law binding, renders every part of it binding. Every precept is supported by all, and by precisely the same sanctions, which support the whole law. Hence, the same principle which will lead us to delight in the law of God, as such, will lead us to delight in every precept of that law. That one fear of God, and that one love of God, and that one trust in God, which will cause us to respect, love, and keep his law, will cause us to respect, love, and keep every

known precept of it. Consequently, the allowed and continued violation of any known precept, shows that such violator is destitute of that fear, love, and trust, which are the principles of all and of any true and acceptable obedience — that his conscience is not under the dominion of God's authority, nor his heart under the dominion of his love — that so far as these principles are concerned, he is a transgressor of the whole law, and is so regarded by Him who looketh on the heart, and will judge the secrets of men — and that he is kept back from the formal violation of every particular precept, by something else than religious principle. There is in him a lack, which is not the believer's lack — God sees in him a spot which is not the spot of his children, but the utter defection of a revolted heart. He may be very moral, dignified, and amiable—he may be a decent observer of many things — he may, to human observation, keep the whole law, except in this one point; but, allowing himself in the violation of this, God marks him as a rebel and an enemy. And if he live and die in the allowed commission

of this one sin, or the allowed neglect of this one duty, he will live, and die, and enter eternity, with the wrath of God abiding on him. "If I regard sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Now it does not admit of a question whether it is a Divine command or not, to confess Christ before men. The passages already quoted are decisive proof. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." How plain the duty! What a promise awaits obedience! what a penalty disobedience! How important the precept which is sustained by such sanctions! The Saviour recognizes no neutral ground—no place of standing between confessing him and denying him. All who confess him not, are held as denying him: "He that is not for me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." "Them that honor me, I will honor; and they who despise me, shall be lightly esteemed." There is no

middle ground between honoring Christ and despising him. He who does not honor him by implicit obedience to his every command, despises him. He will accept no other confession of him than that which owns him to be "LORD, to the glory of God the Father;" and, as Lord and Lawgiver, submits to him in all his commands.

One of these commands is, in reference to eating and drinking at his table: "*This do in remembrance of me.*" As Lord, he, in this institution, prescribes the way in which we shall confess him, and it is a casting off of his authority to rely on any other way of confessing him as sufficient, while this is neglected. But this is done by all those, who profess to be friends of the Redeemer, or wish to be considered such, and yet obey not the command—"This do in remembrance of me." And then the very nature and circumstances of this command are such as to fix on disobedience to it the brand of a peculiar insensibility. There, is our Lord and Sovereign, in the character of our dying Saviour. As the hour of agony draws nigh, he thinks of

our frailty and temptations, and provides for our stability. He appoints a memorial of himself. See them! They are the emblems of his broken body and shed blood—his body broken for us, his blood shed for the remission of our sins! They tell of his sufferings on account of our sins, and for the salvation of our immortal souls! They recall all the transactions and sufferings of that dark and dismal night; that fearful tragedy; "that hour and power of darkness"—the anguish of Gethsemane; the horrors and oppression of the high-priest's palace and Pilate's judgment hall; the ignominy and agony of the cross! They place the Saviour before us as the point of convergency for all the malice of men, the fury of hell, and the wrath of Heaven—and undergoing all for our salvation! As they tell us of his sufferings, they also tell us of his love, his grace, his benefits. And now from the throne of his glory, he points to them, and through them to his suffering, bleeding, body, and his deathless love, and all his matchless claims on our affectionate remembrance and obedience, and says, "This do in remembrance of

me!" How insensible the heart, that refuses to obey! My friend, can you name the command, disobedience to which can give more decided proof of insensibility to a Saviour's claims?

As Lord, Christ Jesus commands us to take his yoke upon us—that is, to put ourselves in the place, and maintain the character of his subjects, and, as such, to conform to the government and laws of his kingdom. Now the man who does not confess Christ, just refuses to do this. Here is a command, which he refuses to obey. He may do many things which the Lord Jesus requires, but this he does not do. He does not enroll himself as a subject of Christ's kingdom. He refuses those seals, which the Saviour has appointed to put a visible difference between his subjects and the people of the world. He therefore can not be considered a subject bearing the Redeemer's yoke, any more than that man can be recognized as a citizen, who refuses the oath of allegiance. There is, then, a plain point here in the law, in which he offends, and though he keep the whole law beside, yet by offending in this point, he is guilty of all. By the position

which he takes at this point, he proves himself a rebel to Zion's King.

I refer not to the man, who is really deterred by conscientious difficulties, and who is diligently, with real concern, seeking to have his way clear; but to the man, who, knowing the Divine law in the matter, refuses to swear fealty to Zion's King, and endeavors to make himself easy in the refusal, or thinks lightly of his obligations to wear the Saviour's yoke. This man, I say, is, in principle, a transgressor of the whole law. He is not under the dominion of the Saviour's authority and love. He carries with him the heart of a rebel, and is striving to make his conscience easy in the indulgence of a principle which will, if not repented of, lead him down to hell.

He may say in his heart, as is often said openly, "I can be as good a Christian out of the Church, as I can in it;" but this is just saying, "There is one thing in which I may trample the authority of God under foot; one command, in regard to which I may carry about in me the heart of a rebel. I can be the friend of God,

and yet disobey his Son; I can be the friend of Christ, and yet discard his yoke." And what is this but to proclaim independence of the Bible, and of its great Author? What, but downright infidelity! "I will obey God when I please and as far as I please, and no further!" That is, "I stand perfectly independent of revelation. I will do what it enjoins so far as I see proper; for I believe that a man may be just as good a man pursuing this course, as if he yielded a most scrupulous and exact obedience to all its injunctions." Could infidelity ask more?

The whole New Testament proceeds on the principle, that a saving faith in Christ is inseparable from a spirit of implicit obedience to the Saviour. Hence the language of the great commission: "He that believeth and *is baptized*, shall be saved;" in which it is implied, that every true believer will obey the Saviour in the ordinance of baptism; which is the first formal act of the Christian profession, with a man called out of the world. The same principle which leads a man to obey the command to believe on the Lord Jesus, will lead him to obey

that other command, to be baptized in his name; and a refusal to obey the latter, is to be regarded as proof of disobedience to the former. Whence it follows, that every neglecter of baptism, or of that profession which it seals, is to be regarded as an unbeliever, and as yet in his sins.

Hence, too, the language of the Apostle Peter, to the convicted multitudes, on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins." That repentance only, which would prove its genuineness by obedience to the King and Head of the Church by receiving his appointed seal of discipleship, would secure the remission of sins. The faith that lays hold of pardon through the Redeemer's blood, will lay hold of the seal of that pardon: "They that gladly received the word, were baptized." It is on the same principle that the Apostle says, in the words quoted near the beginning of this Letter: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The heart that believes will prompt the mouth to confess; and therefore no man who refuses this

confession can be regarded as an heir of salvation. The Christian profession follows a justifying faith as inseparably and as infallibly as action follows life.

In my next I shall call your attention to some additional considerations on this vital question.

Yours,

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LETTER IX.

THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

[Continued.]

My Dear Friend:—

In the close of my last, I promised you some additional considerations on the importance and necessity of the Christian Profession. My first argument—the only one presented—was derived from the necessity of universal obedience. No man can disobey Christ in this matter, without standing convicted as a rebel against Jehovah and his Christ. This consideration might be deemed sufficient of itself, for you know who has said, "As for these mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them

hither and slay them before me." But it may be profitable to view the subject in some other of its aspects. And,

II. A second consideration, which I would urge, is, *that it is only in maintaining this profession that we are authorized to expect the Saviour's blessing on the means of grace.* The means of grace are institutions belonging to his kingdom. He has given them to his Church, and they belong nowhere else, and it is only as they are in connection with his Church, that we have any warrant to expect his blessing in them. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy."

The Church is a society, or body corporate, which Christ has organized in this world. Of it he is the head. To it, and for its welfare and prosperity, he has given his word, ministry, and ordinances. He dwells in it by his Spirit; and

through his word, ministry, and ordinances, imparts to it, and to its members, his blessing. With his gracious presence accompanying the institutions he has given it, it gathers members from the world, and they become partakers of this blessing by becoming members of the body. It is sinners of the world that are converted through the instrumentality of this body corporate, but no one remaining in the world and refusing to join the body, can reasonably expect to participate in the privileges and benefits peculiar to the body. It is just as it is in all other cases. No man who refuses to join a particular society or body corporate, can expect to enjoy the peculiar benefits of said society or body corporate. Those who remain in the world are never, in the Scriptures, in any instance, considered as saints, or as members of the body of Christ. The Church visible is ever regarded as embracing the Church invisible, and in no case are we directed to find the latter outside of the former.

Mark the language of the Apostle on this subject: "There is one body and one Spirit,

even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And he gave (that is, he gave the Church, or body) some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the

body to the edifying of itself in love."—Eph. iv, 1–16. Again: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past gentiles in the flesh—that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together, for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

These quotations are long, but they should be read and pondered with care.

From them it is manifest, that the object of Christ in organizing a visible Church on earth, was not merely to make converts, but, by bringing these converts into a distinct society, sep-

arate from the world, to train them up and perfect them for heaven. Now the man who does not become a member of the Church says, so far as his example and influence can go, "A Church shall not exist." If all would do as he does, there would be no such thing as a Church. He thereby opposes himself to the constitution of Christ, and would annihilate the instrumentality which he has appointed for the conversion of the world. But he does more. He shuts himself out from the blessings of the Saviour, reposited in that society, for the perfecting of its members to everlasting life; and he has not the shadow of a reason to hope, that he, refusing to join the body, shall, like the members of the body, "come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Christ's way, and the only reasonable way, for him to do so, is to become incorporated in the body. This he refuses, and he need not be at all surprised, if he should have no experience of the life, and health, and growth appertaining to the body. It were absurd

to expect it. Let no one, forsaking the way of Christ's appointment, look for his blessing in the way of his own perverse choosing. His promise reaches only to where he has recorded his name. His language is, "In all places where I have recorded my name, there will I come unto thee and bless thee." It is only in his Church, and the ordinances which he has given his Church, that his name is recorded; and there alone, may his presence and blessing be expected. It is the very object of these ordinances, and especially of those sacramental institutions, by which Church-membership is recognized and Christ confessed, to promote the spiritual nourishment of believers and their growth in grace. By them Christ and his benefits are represented, signified, and sealed to believers; and the man who refuses them, can not expect the blessings which they are the appointed means of conveying.

The Church is the commonwealth of God's chosen people—his kingdom, his house, his family. The promise is only to the citizens of this commonwealth, the subjects of this kingdom, the

members of this family. Every society is exclusive in its nature—the very idea of a society involves the idea of exclusion. Those not members are excluded from its peculiar privileges. Now the privileges of the Church are not merely external, but spiritual and saving. Without the latter, there would be no significancy in the former. How then can those who are not citizens in the commonwealth of Israel, or subjects in the Redeemer's kingdom, expect the spiritual, any more than the external, privileges of that kingdom or commonwealth? How can those not members in the household of faith, expect to share in the blessings of the family? The peace, and the government of the Prince of peace, is upon the kingdom of David—the Church—to order and establish IT. It is nowhere else. It is only to those who "take his yoke upon them," that he promises "rest"—"rest to their souls." It is only those who had confessed Jesus Christ before men and become members of the Christian Church, that the Apostle calls "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

And who beside these has any warrant from the Bible to expect the privileges of Zion's commonwealth and God's family? Does any one say, *all believers?* But where do we find the Bible recognize any as true believers, who did not become Church-members? To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, in apostolic times, implied connection with his Church. We are told, that "the Lord added to the Church daily, such as should be saved." The plain import of which is, that all believers joined the Church, and that out of the Church there is "no ordinary possibility of salvation"—that, inasmuch as the object of the Church is to carry on the salvation of all converted to the faith, so all converts must join the Church, knowing "that salvation is of the Church of God."

Here let me close by quoting the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith; it expresses only what has been taught on this subject, in all ages with one consent: "The visible Church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,

the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Unto this catholic, visible Church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto."

Yours,

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LETTER X.

THE NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

[Concluded.]

My Dear Friend:—

I have been urging the claims of the Christian profession from two considerations, either of which is sufficient to settle the question at the bar of an honest and enlightened conscience: 1. From the necessity of universal obedience. 2. From the fact, that out of the Church of God there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. But there are other considerations which should not be overlooked. They add force to those already adduced.

III. And a very important argument in favor

of the necessity and importance of this profession, may be derived from *the social principles of our nature.* Man is by nature a social creature. His faculties, his feelings, and wants; his convenience and comfort, all point him to society, and render it necessary that he should exist in the social state. But he must of necessity partake, in no small degree, of the views, feelings and character of that society to which he belongs, and of those persons with whom he is habitually associated. They likewise lay claims upon him, and demand of him a homogeneity of views, feelings, and character; and if he comply not with these demands he loses caste. Hence it is plain, that it must be a most difficult matter, if not utterly impossible, for a man, remaining out of the Church, to maintain the duties and character, the views and feelings, of a Christian. If actuated by these views and feelings, the social principles of his nature will prompt him to join the Church. He will naturally seek to be associated, in all the confidence of brotherhood, with those of kindred sentiment and feeling. Here, unquestionably, he will find it more easy and

pleasant to perform the duties, and lead the life of a Christian. While he does not profess Christ the world claims him, and expects him to conform to its usages, pursuits, and pleasures. His intercourse is of necessity most with the men of the world. He must make them his familiars and confidants. If he do not, they will take a liberty with him, which they dare not take with a professor of religion. They will make him the butt of their raillery. They will tease him to join in their sports and pleasures. They will ply all their temptations and all their seductive arts. They will consult his taste, and leave no stone unturned to make him like themselves. The circle in which he moves may be above the gaming-table, and the grog-shop, but there is enough in the fashionable amusements of the higher circles to banish serious thoughts, and ossify the heart.

Young men, whose characters are yet being formed, specially need the guarding influences of Church-membership. Leaving home to attend college, to acquire a knowledge of business, or learn a trade, or in some other way just enter-

ing on the duties and responsibilities of life, they are in special danger. Almost everywhere, especially in our cities and villages, there is a class of men, whose feelings and principles lead them to associate in works of darkness. The distinctions which they maintain in the open walks of life, are lost in the nightly cabal, around the card-table, in the grog-shop, and in those sinks of infamy and guilt which are "the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." With such persons, though there may not be a formal agreement or a fixed plan, there is yet a secret consent, to seduce every young man who may come within their reach, and reduce him to their own standard. If there is a hell, they wish to go there in company, and every new recruit helps to silence misgivings. They are the retailers of infidel scoffs and sneers, of smutty anecdotes, of dark innuendos against ministers of the Gospel and other pious men. They laugh at religion—count its scruples weakness and superstition, and its holiest truths the tales of the nursery. They know how to raise objections, start difficulties, and excite doubts. They know how to turn the

frailties and foibles of Christians to ridicule, and raise the laugh not simply at their expense, but at the expense of religion itself. They are familiar with the infidel and immoral literature of the age, conversant with all its fascinating amusements; at home in the lurking-places of evil, and with instinctive shrewdness prepared to suit their decoy to the taste and the temperament of their destined victim. They know how to approach a young man—how to spread the snare for his feet—how to lead him into it. They know how to make themselves agreeable, and how to flatter. "You are a fine fellow, and will soon get the better of your prejudices. All you want is a little knowledge of the world. Religion is well enough for old folks; but, if you have any spirit, now is the time to enjoy yourself." If any one yields the least, they will advance upon him, and always keep the ground they get; and their prey will be forced to yield more, and they will advance on him, and advance on him, till he is lost. "Evil communications corrupt good manners. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." "Enter not into

the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some one to fall."

To these influences young men out of the Church are fearfully exposed; but the Christian profession is a shield. When a person confesses Christ before men, and by joining the Church declares himself on the Lord's side, he bids such characters away. The language of his conduct is, "Depart from me, ye wicked men; ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God." He abandons the world, and the world gives up its claim on him. He has taken his stand; and they feel that it is useless any longer to ply him with their seductive arts. Hate his profession as they may, and do, there is yet a venerableness, a sacredness around it, that puts an end to all their freedoms and familiarities, and keeps them at a distance. Or, if they do attack him, it is no longer with the lure of the tempter, but with the bitterness of an open enemy.

What a sad omen is it then, that our young men so generally postpone the Christian profession. They cast away the shield, which the Saviour would interpose between them and the adversaries of their souls, and travel unprotected the most dangerous part of their pilgrimage through the enemy's land! No wonder so many fall victims to the foe, and so few attain the promised rest. It argues a fearful indifference to their eternal interests—or a no less dangerous self-confidence. For let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

But not only is the man, who refuses the Christian profession, exposed to the dangerous influences of the world, but he shuts himself out from the benign social influences of the people of God. While a man does not make a profession, he can not enjoy with freedom and confidence the society of Christian people. He and they both feel a restraint and a distrust, which Christians do not feel toward one another. They can not regard him as a brother, and can not act toward him with the feelings they have to a brother; and he knows and feels that they can

not. Their society, therefore is less pleasing and less profitable to him. His sympathies as a social being, will lead him to seek society and the free and unreserved intercourse of men somewhere; and the very fact that he does not and can not enjoy it among Christians, will tempt him to seek it in the world.

But when a man joins the Church, and just in proportion as he walks worthy of his profession, he is admitted to the confidence and the sympathies of all the true members of the household of faith, and, enjoying the advantages of their society, is freed from the temptation, to which the non-professor is exposed, to indulge his social affections in the society and customs of the world, whose "friendship is enmity with God."

IV. Another consideration, my friend, worthy of your attention, is, *that a profession of religion is necessary in order to a filial and comfortable discharge of other Christian duties.* Here I may appeal to the experience of those persons who have been under the government of religious convictions, and have felt it to be their duty to

join the Church, but yet have delayed from time to time. Have you never observed, how they have been deterred from certain duties, as, for example, family worship, and the invocation of the Divine blessing on their meals, in a great measure by the consideration that they were not professors of religion? This, particularly in the presence of strangers. They felt, that had they been professors of religion, it would have been expected of them; but not being such, it would rather excite surprise; and so, being destitute of the plea and reason of the Christian profession, their feelings of backwardness and timidity overcame their sense of duty.

But there is another thing to be considered. Living in the neglect of the known duty of confessing Christ, their conscience is not void of offense toward God. The guilt of this neglect, and of those other neglects into which it betrays them, haunts them in those Christian duties which they do attempt. The feeling of a culprit steals upon them as they read their Bible, or hear the Gospel, or kneel in their closet. The spirit of bondage and fear entrammels them.

They are are strangers to the boldness and liberty of the spirit of adoption, and to the feelings of a child of God in communion with his Heavenly Father. This renders the secret duties of religion less pleasant, if not unpleasant—and tempts to their total neglect. In the midst of these duties they are ever and anon reminded of these awful sayings of Christ, and the monitor within whispers that they stand recorded against *them:* "If any man be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

V. Finally, I would have you to consider, that *the solemn obligations under which we come in professing Christ, are a salutary and a necessary check and safeguard of our religious principles, amid the temptations of life.* We are weak; and temptations, manifold and powerful, beset us on every side. The vows and obligations of the Christian profession, when duly consid-

ered, serve to place us on our guard, and impose a powerful restraint on our rising passions and clamorous appetites. The thought that we have vowed to God, and have done so over the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the Redeemer, and in the presence of the Church, and the world, and of angels and men—that, by doing this sinful thing, or leaving that duty undone, we shall break our covenant with our God, and bring reproach on his name, is a thought well suited to make us rally, and recover our standing in the hour when temptation has caused us to waver. It is a means of conservation which He, who knows our frames, has appointed; and it is one which wisdom and humility will embrace, and which folly and pride only will reject. It is no impeachment of a man's moral or religious principle to say that he needs it. Just so the oath in civil matters. It is exacted of the most honorable and virtuous men. Its application to the most illustrious individuals is based, certainly not on the ground of any particular lack of virtue, but on the ground of our

common frailty, which renders such restraints and safeguards needful.

My Friend, let me entreat you to lay these considerations to heart. Review them:—First; You can not refuse this profession without disobeying Christ; and willful disobedience, in any case, is damning. Second; It is only in the Church of God that you have any warrant to expect the saving influence of the Holy Spirit to make you meet for heaven. Third; The very laws of your social nature require you, if you would be saved, to withdraw from the society of the world, and join that of the people of God; and this you can do only by joining the Church. Fourth; A profession of religion is necessary to the filial and comfortable performance of other religious duties; so that if you neglect this profession, you expose yourself to the danger of abandoning religion altogether. And, finally; The vows and obligations of the Christian profession are a necessary safeguard amid the temptations of life. And, withal, keep in mind the solemn and oft-repeated declaration of Him whose words never

fall to the ground, that he will deny before his Father and the holy angels, the man who neglects this profession. Consider these things, and if you have never made this profession, it is high time for you to make your final decision. Then make up your mind; and whatever *reason* decides to be duty, do it with your might.

There are two classes of non-professors; and, if you are a non-professor, it behooves you to consider to which of these classes you belong.

First; there are the manifestly *careless.* These are unfit to join the Church. But why? Because destitute of religion. They are unbelievers and impenitent sinners. They may have a speculative belief in the truth and doctrines of Christianity; but they believe not with their hearts. With all their belief, they are careless; while the very devils believe and tremble. They know that they are unfit to join the Church; but, O! that they would lay to heart all that is implied in their unfitness. It is, that they are destitute, and that by their own willful rejection of it, of the only justifying righteousness made known to a guilty world,

and are consequently under the wrath and curse of Almighty God. This is their condemnation, that light has come into the world, and they have chosen darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. By their unbelief they "make God a LIAR;" and "the wrath of God abideth on them." Unfit for the society of God's people here, they are much more unfit for heaven. The only place in the universe for which they are fit, is hell. They are continued on earth only by the long-suffering of God. Their first duty, and their only hope, is to flee immediately, without another moment's delay, from the wrath to come, and betake themselves, by faith in a crucified Saviour, to the only hope for our lost world. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

But there is another class of non-professors: They may be called *serious persons.* Such keep the Sabbath, read the Bible, attend the house of God, perhaps attend the prayer-meeting, and keep up family duties and closet religion; but

they keep back from the Lord's table. Their usual plea is their unworthiness, and their fear of failing in their profession. Both these pleas show a dangerous unbelief. If they had a proper sense of their unworthiness, they would go to Christ, that through his righteousness and grace they might be rendered meet; and if they had a proper sense of their weakness, they would rely on the spirit of Christ to strengthen them. They would hail with joy the assurance, "My grace shall be sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It is not by remaining out of the Church that they are to make trial of Christ's faithfulness and grace to support them in the faith and obedience of the Gospel; but by professing his name, and seeking him in all his institutions.

And if any, professing to have these fears, do really mourn over their unbelief; if they are pained under their sense of unworthiness; if they long to be delivered from their sins and their temptations; if they thirst after an interest in Christ, and after conformity to his

image, and conscientiously wait on God in all other duties; then it is their privilege, as well as their duty, to come to the table of the Lord, as the best means, and the appointed means, of strengthening their faith, and delivering them from their doubts and fears. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Israel's shepherd "gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom." "He has compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way." "The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench."

Sometimes we find men excusing themselves for not joining the Church, by adverting to the infirmities and inconsistencies of professors of religion. This is sometimes done in connection with an expression of fear, that they themselves might fail in like manner. But what does this fear in this connection amount to? To nothing less than a charge that the failure

of these members of the Church has falsified the Saviour's promise. Because these have failed, through their unbelief, you are not willing to trust the Saviour's word! But sometimes the inconsistencies and infirmities of professors are referred to as a real objection to the Christian profession. This is another example of the illogical reasoning of the carnal heart. Can the failure of some men to do their duty, when they profess to do it, excuse others in neglecting their duty altogether? Until this is made out, the objection is worthless. The professor who fails in his profession, must account to God for that failure; and the man who altogether neglects that profession, must account for that neglect. "Every man shall bear his own burden."

Occasionally we find men pleading, that there is no Church in reach whose doctrines and worship suit them. Where this plea is conscientious, let such, for their own good and their children's, and for the glory of Christ, be entreated to move, even should it be with worldly loss, into the bounds of a Church with

which they can conscientiously unite. But often, I fear, the plea is insincere; and it behooves those who use it to inquire, in the presence of Him who will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, if they are not merely consulting their own convenience and indifference in remaining out of the Church? And let them ask themselves, if they are not living in the frequent omission, if not total neglect, of closet devotion and family religion? "Doth not He that pondereth the heart, consider it? and He that keepeth thy soul, doth He not know it? And shall not He render to every man according to his works?"

Yours,

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LETTER XI.

THE TRIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

My Dear Friend: —

Having taken a view of the nature, duties, importance, and necessity of the Christian profession, I would now place before you some of its trials. Our Saviour does not wish us to enter on this profession without counting the cost. He gives us fair warning, that trials — peculiar trials — await us if we enlist in his service; and he will have us to enlist with no other feelings than those of men who expect to endure hardness as good soldiers. The following passage, in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, is very instructive: "And there went great multitudes with him;

and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, can not be my disciple. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath, can not be my disciple."

Jesus Christ wants no faint-hearted recruits. Every man who joins his standard, must come

fully resolved, fully equipped, prepared to do battle to the end. In order to do this, one thing necessary is to know something of the trials which await him. To be forewarned, is to be forearmed.

The peculiar trials of the Christian profession, flow from the peculiar station which the Christian, from the very nature of his profession, occupies; from the peculiar duties he has to perform; and, from the circumstances in which he is called to exercise his profession, having to contend with indwelling sin, the fascinations and oppositions of this sinful world, and, the crafty, malicious, and powerful efforts of Satan. It will, therefore, my Friend, be necessary to carry with us a view of the nature and duties of this profession. You will please, then, recur to the points presented in Letters Second to the Seventh inclusive.

Some of the sorest trials of the Christian, and deserving to be named first, are those which result from his contendings with *self*. In all his duties, there is an opposing principle within himself, against which he has to main-

tain a continual warfare — "Sin which dwelleth in him." "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that ye can not do the things that ye would." The "flesh" is the principle of remaining depravity in the Christian; elsewhere called the "old man," which is described as "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." It is called the *man*, because the corruption affects the whole human person in all his parts and powers; and the *old* man, because it denotes the principle under which we are first by nature, and continue to be till we are regenerated, and because it is a principle which, in the true Christian, is decaying, and will at last vanish away. It is called the *flesh*, because its propensities are, in their more striking workings, excited and gratified through the bodily organs, and because it continues to trouble the Christian so long as he is in this present body, and no longer.

In regeneration, a new principle is created in the soul — a principle of spiritual life — a principle of holiness. This is called the *spirit*, and

the *new man.* The *spirit;* because produced by the Holy Spirit; because it renders the man in whom it is, spiritual;—in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, like unto God, the Father of spirits; and because it fits us for the enjoyments and employments of the spiritual world. It is called the *new man;* because it pervades the whole man in his entire moral constitution; and because it comes in after the principle of corruption has had the sway, and grows strong as that principle decays, and shall flourish in the beauty and vigor of immortal youth, when the other shall have forever disappeared. These two principles are in direct and uncompromising antagonism. "These are contrary the one to the other." The consequence is a continual conflict. The spirit, or new man, is for maintaining the Christian profession, with all its affections and duties. The flesh, the old man, is opposed; and, though the spirit is predominant, the other is strong and restless:—an enemy, though mortally wounded, yet of an unsubdued and unsubduable spirit, putting forth his energies,

and taking advantage at every opportunity; and, with the world and Satan as auxiliaries, it gains many a temporary advantage, so that the Christian "can not do the things which he would."

Such is the Christian's condition in this world. In heaven alone will the spiritual, or new man, reign unimpeded, unannoyed, by the flesh. There alone shall the Christian serve and enjoy God without painful conflicts with corrupt self; for, from this corrupt self he will never be entirely delivered, till he enter that state of sinless perfection. The greater spiritual maturity he attains, the less violent and painful, for the most part, will the struggle become; because, as the flesh waxes weaker, and the spirit waxes stronger, the conquest will be more easy; but the warfare ceases not till carnal self is destroyed. As long as the Christian is in this world, he needs to keep the law of Christ practically in view, as a law that still continues to be applicable to himself: "If any man will come after me, let him deny *himself*."

The denial of *self* will be his work till the end of his days.

That professing Christian may seem to savor of a high degree of sanctity, who says that he finds nothing difficult or painful, in this matter. But if he speaks as he feels, it is manifest that he is a stranger to the work of self-denial — that he does *not* deny himself, and is a miserable self-deceiver. And, my friend, if there is nothing in which you have to exercise a painful self-denial, I tremble for your condition! Even the apostle Paul, who did "not count his life dear unto him" for Christ's sake, had yet to lament with a heart wrung with anguish, "I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inner

man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

It is evident that the apostle in this passage gave his then present experience — his experience as a Christian, highly sanctified though he was — and not his experience before his conversion, as some contend. The subject of this painful conflict, and of this doleful complaint, describes himself at the same time as "*delighting in the law of God, after the inner man.*" But no unregenerate person can delight in the law of God; on the contrary, as the apostle affirms in the very next chapter, "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

In another place, speaking of himself, as all must admit, in his apostolic course, he uses the following figurative, but very expressive language, graphically descriptive of a powerful and painful struggle with self: "I, therefore,

so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

All parts of Scripture concur in representing the denial of self, not only as the duty of the professing Christian, but as a duty involving trials and difficulties of the most painful kinds. Various figures are used to represent this. Is it a painful thing for a man of sensibility to have his feelings mortified — or, is mortification in any member of the body usually connected with severe, and often extreme, pain? This figure is used: "Mortify, therefore, your members which are on the earth." Is the plucking out of an eye, or the amputation of an arm or a foot painful? This figure is used: "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." But worst of all, is crucifixion

painful, in which the body, after being severely scourged, is fastened by iron spikes, driven through the hands and feet, to a cross, which is then violently planted in the ground, and the body, suspended in its whole weight by the hands and feet, is left to linger, in an agony of torture, till death? This figure is used: "Crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Those things, which are in themselves painful and disagreeable, become far more so when we have to inflict them on ourselves. Many have suffered the amputation of an arm or leg, but few could summon courage to amputate their own. But all these painful deeds of self-denial we must perform on ourselves. It is *self*-denial. It is that which requires moral courage — a doing, and suffering, and foregoing things from fixed principles. "Let him deny *himself*." "Mortify *your* corrupt members." "If *thine* eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee." Now all this, making all due allowance for the strength of the figures, may teach us, that that professor of the religion of Jesus, who has no painful and disagreeable struggles with

self, in the discharge of his duties as a Christian, has the strongest reason to apprehend that he has only a name to live.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and sad and distressing is the evidence which the truly enlightened Christian has of this truth in the workings of depravity in his own heart. It meets and annoys and strives to baffle him at every point; it would corrupt his purest affections and pollute his holiest services.

In the first great duty of the Christian Profession, for example — that is, in the exercise of those vital principles of grace which lie at the foundation of the Christian character — what a conflict with self does the true Christian experience! Here the enemy is *righteous* self. The man of undissembled piety finds it a most difficult matter to feel himself sufficiently low in the presence of God; and after his most strenuous efforts to abase himself, it is his grief that he thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think. And this proneness to form a good opinion of himself, often involves him in

the meshes of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency ere he is aware. It steals upon him like the nightmare at the very time that he is reposing most sweetly in communion with God; and then, like a dark cloud on the face of the sun, it obscures his view of God's glory, holiness and grace, and covers from his sight the light of God's countenance. A feeling of self-righteousness often steals in with the happy consciousness of gracious affections, and gracious conduct, to mar his reliance on the Saviour's merits; and a feeling of self-sufficiency, to mar his reliance on the Saviour's grace. Insidious self-esteem often prevents him from realizing the hatefulness of sin, and from humbling himself, and loathing and abhorring himself, as he would, and hardens that heart which he wishes to keep broken and contrite. Self-love clashes with love to God, and with benevolence to men; and militates against a proper concern for his own soul. Of all this every true Christian is more or less sensible; and deplores, that in *himself*, he finds an enemy at the very threshhold—an enemy that assails the life and soul of his profession.

Follow the Christian into the second great duty of his profession—the observance of Gospel ordinances. Here depraved self opposes him in various ways. It suggests divers excuses for neglecting them, or some of them — if not altogether — for a season, until a more convenient time; if not for a season, at least for this time—this once—only this once. But if the Christian will not at all neglect, then the workings of this indwelling depravity render him liable to formality. He must watch and pray, lest, while he keeps up the forms of worship, he fall into a spiritual stupor that would turn all into a lip service and the solemn mockery of an unengaged heart—a besetting sin, it is to be feared, of many professing Christians of the present day. But should the Christian gain the mastery at this point, and find himself enabled to worship God with lively affections, then he is in danger of self-complacency and self-adulation; of taking glory to himself, instead of ascribing all the glory to God; and of trusting his frames and his graces, instead of relying solely in the righteousness and grace of Christ. Thus it is

a battle from beginning to end; and the enemy within is to be watched and resisted at every step.

Again; follow the Christian into the third great duty of his profession—the practice of the social virtues. Self-interest and appetite tempt him to turn aside from that which is just, and true, and pure, and lovely, and praiseworthy; while his profession not only calls him to a higher exhibition of these virtues than is furnished in the practice of worldly men, but requires him to be virtuous from higher principles than those which influence the men of the world. The latter are virtuous from selfish principles, or from principles resolvable into selfishness, and the great difficulty of the Christian is so to deny himself as to rise above these principles, and practice the social virtues from a pure sense of duty—to do those things which are just and true, and of good report, not because it will secure him the respect and good-will of men, nor yet merely because these things are useful to society, but chiefly because they are just, and right, and agreeable to the will of

God. The Christian has then to combat the selfish tendencies of his nature, not merely that he may not come short in the practice of these virtues, but also that he may practice from higher principles than those of the world.

But it is in the next class of Christian duties, that our indwelling depravity arrays itself in most vigorous and restless antagonism—in the exercise of humility, meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness; those tempers and graces, which are peculiarly Christ-like, and which pre-eminently distinguish the possessor as a disciple of Jesus. These are the peculiar and distinguishing virtues of the Gospel, which our proud, selfish hearts are most reluctant to obey. The Gospel says, "Be clothed with humility;" but self is proud. The Gospel says, "Blessed are the meek;" but self is easily provoked, stirs up wrath, and flies into a passion. The Gospel says, "Forbear one another in love;" but self exclaims, "I will bear it no longer." The Gospel says, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath for-

given you;" but self is implacable, resentful, and stern in demanding satisfaction. The Gospel says, "Confess your faults to one another, and pray for one another;" but self is high-spirited, and says, "I can not stoop to that."

And in the last-named duty of the Christian profession, that of studying the prosperity of the Christian commonwealth, the Christian has to combat that corrupt principle still lurking within him, which would lead him to seek his own, instead of the things of Jesus Christ. The selfish passions of envy, pride and vain-glory, would disturb Zion's peace, and increase her divisions. The love of ease would render him inactive in her service. A selfish dread of public opinion, the fear of man which bringeth a snare, and the love of popularity would cramp, or turn aside, those energies, which he should employ in the cause of truth and holiness, and in opposing infidelity, error, and vice. And the love of wealth and worldly display, self-interest, and indulgence in the conveniences and luxuries of

life, and parsimony, which is notoriously fruitful in its excuses, would suggest various pleas, why he should contribute sparingly for the spread of the Gospel.

Thus far, my dear friend, I have endeavored to point out some of the difficulties and trials, with which the Christian has to contend in his profession, growing out of the selfish and depraved principles of his own heart. This is his most dangerous enemy, that one which gives every other the advantage. To this enemy the attention of Christians is not sufficiently directed. They are not sufficiently aware of his power, his deadly hostility to the soul, and to the honor and service of Christ. But he must be watched, resisted, subdued, or we shall fail both in the duties of our profession and in the recompense of the reward.

Truly the Christian is a phenomenon, which can not be explained to the world. His soul is the seat of grand antagonisms, and the theater of a mighty conflict, involving the interests of eternity, and the rival claims of the Sovereign of the universe and of the Prince of darkness.

The struggle is painful, but it must be endured. If it be not, the soul will inevitably fall the easy and hopeless prey of the Destroyer.

In my next, I will notice some trials of a different character.

Yours,

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LETTER XII.

THE TRIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

[Concluded.]

My Dear Friend:—

We have seen how, in maintaining his profession, the Christian has to contend with self. But there are other sources of trial and difficulty. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." The *world* in its attractions and interests, its social influences, and the hatred and opposition of its people, throws many obstacles in the path of the Christian Profession.

The *things* of the world occasion many a trial of the Christian's faith, and cause him to waver in duty. Often its cares and embarrassments pour their anguish into his heart, and distract

his soul with vexing thoughts. Wealth, fame, power, pleasure, fashion, present themselves with all their blandishments and charms, and strive to divert his attention from the invisible world; to efface from his mind its solemn realities; to call him away from the objects of faith, to the objects of sense; to engross his mind and heart; to dislodge the love of God from his soul, and enthrone in its stead the love of the world; to turn him aside from the great duties of Gospel obedience, and cause him to walk after the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Alas! how many have been prevented from making the Christian profession; and how many, when they have made it, have failed in maintaining it, or even turned aside from the holy commandment delivered unto them, through the influence of business, and politics, and worldly associations! By grasping at wealth and being drawn into the vortex of speculation and trade—a besetting evil and danger of the age; by aspiring at office and fame; by engaging with eagerness in political strife; by indulging in the convivial-

ities of the jovial board, and in fashionable amusements, whether at the ball, the party, the dinner-table, the theater, or the country frolic, they have encountered temptations which have proved too strong for their strength, and they have fallen. The world is full of temptations on every hand; at every turn it displays its lure, adapted to every temperament and taste; and, go where we will, it makes the base appeal to our passions and appetites. How continually should the Christian be on his guard! How should he watch and pray, that he enter not into temptation! How should the warning be sounding perpetually in his ears, "Love not the world, nor the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction

and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

But if the things of the world present obstacles to the Christian profession, so do the *people* of the world; and in various ways.

Trials to his profession await the Christian, growing out of the very ties which bind him to society. Christians are appointed by Christ to be the salt of the earth, and, as such, they are dispersed through the social mass. The whole world lieth in wickedness, and the friendship of the world is enmity with God; but yet it is the will of God, that his people should be brought into contact with the several portions

of this corrupt mass, by the divers ties and in the varied intercourse of the social state. As husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, associates in business, neighbors, kinsmen, fellow-citizens, they are joined together and mingled, often in the closest intimacies, believers with unbelievers. And this cannot be avoided; and, if it could, an important end would be defeated —Christians would cease to be the salt of the earth.

But though thus intimately blended with the world in the various relations, interests, and pursuits of society, the profession of the Christian forbids him to be conformed to the world in any of its moral traits, or to have any fellowship with it in any of its unfruitful works of darkness; but, on the contrary, makes it his duty, both by precept and example, to reprove them. Now, here is a trial. First, to resist these social influences, and remain unseduced by the numerous and powerful temptations which they present to conform to the world. And, second, to be able, not only to

withstand, but so to withstand, as to be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth;" exerting a positive and effectual moral influence over the ungodly with whom he is connected. And, third, to have moral courage to risk the ill-will of those to whom he may be endeared by many ties. Experience shows, that it is exceedingly difficult to keep up the intercourse of these several relationships, and at the same time maintain, without abatement of principle, or compliance with the world, the holy, godly, and heavenly deportment of the Christian. And also, that it is painfully trying, by a course of unflinching and uncompromising firmness, to resist the wishes, wound the feelings, and procure to ourselves the coldness and indifference—perhaps the ill-will and raillery—of those with whom we are closely connected, and are under the necessity of daily intercourse, whom we respect and love, and whose friendship we wish to enjoy.

But fidelity on the part of the Christian exposes him to all this.

There are some things in the Christian Pro-

fession which the world esteems and admires— the social virtues. He that in these things serveth Christ, is not only acceptable to God, but approved of men. He must be a monster, who can condemn or hate these virtues. But still the world hates the Christian profession as such. It hates it as a whole, for the hatred it has to what is peculiar in it. Every attentive observer of men and things, must have noticed the fact, that the Christian gets not half the credit for his honesty and benevolence which the man of the world does. The same virtue which would render an infidel distinguished, will leave a Christian unnoticed — a practical tribute of acknowledgment, by the way, to the excellence of religion; for little is expected of the infidel, and when he happens to present a virtuous character, it attracts our notice. But there is a peculiar willingness in the world to give him credit for his virtues, and a peculiar reluctance to give the Christian credit for his; and a great readiness to give him full credit for all his faults. Now, the reason of this is obvious: — *The world hates the Christian*

Profession. It is prejudiced against it by the antipathies of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God; and men are always reluctant to accord anything virtuous or praiseworthy to those whom they hate, or against whom they are prejudiced. It is on this principle that you see thousands loud in the praise of virtue, yet making a mockery of godliness and piety. And, on this principle, the vices of infidels are concealed, while the sins of professors are trumpeted with an air of triumph; and the virtues of Christians are unnoticed, while those of unbelievers are proclaimed from the housetops. This is only one among many evidences, that the world is up in arms of rebellion against God.

By the profession he makes, the Christian declares himself on God's side; and he may expect to be the butt of the world's hostility. Christ forewarned his disciples of this: "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" "If any man will come after me, let him *take up his cross.*" The cross denotes shame and pain, reproach and suffering, for the sake of a crucified

Saviour. He who professes Christ, not expecting such things, will, if faithful to his Master, be grievously disappointed. And he that is not willing to meet them, is not fit for the kingdom of God.

Sometimes the opposition of the world has more power, and displays more fury and violence, than at others; but it springs from the enmity of the carnal mind; and Christians, in every age, must lay out their accounts to meet it in one form or other; if not in the form of open persecution, yet in other unmistakable manifestations of bitter dislike. It is still true, that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God—that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution—and that, if we were of the world, the world would love its own; and because we are not of the world, but the Saviour has chosen us out of the world, therefore the world hates us.

Sometimes unnecessary opposition is provoked by imprudence. Professors of religion sometimes, and even good men sometimes, have a very unlovely—nay, a repulsive turn; and,

sometimes, they are headlong and rash, and are sure to take the wrong time, as well as the wrong way, of doing things. Religion is certainly not chargeable with all the opposition such men have to encounter. But, on the other hand, much of the quiet which professors enjoy, is owing to a false prudence, and a dastardly, time-serving inactivity. They will not disturb the enemy. There is a lion in the way, and they fear to rouse him. The conscientious and devoted Christian, who will, at all hazards, do his duty, vindicating truth, and exposing error, standing fast to the commandment of his God, reproving sin, restraining vice, and laboring to promote a living, active piety in all, can not escape the hatred, though he may command the respect of the ungodly.

With the hatred of the world, the Christian professor may expect to meet its reproach. His motives will often be misconstrued, and his actions misrepresented. Men will catch at his halting, and exult over his infirmities. The infirmities of brethren will be laid at his door, and laid at the door of his religion. Should

he fail himself, his religion, more than his failure, will be his reproach. He may not exactly hear himself called a hypocrite; but he daily meets with those who affect to count all religion hypocrisy. Should the Christian excel in virtuous and praiseworthy deeds — should his life be unimpeachable; there is some other way of accounting for it, than by the influence of his religion; and it is very sagaciously suspected, that the world does not know all about the man. Thus he is continually reminded that he is in an enemy's country, and that he lives in the midst of those that hate his Saviour. The reproaches of those who reproach his Saviour and his God fall on him. His soul is among lions—among them that are set on fire; even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

This becomes strikingly apparent, if Christians make anything like a decided movement in opposition to the cherished vices of the world. Should, for example, Christians in their place, and other citizens under the influence of Christian principles, attempt the reformation

of community from existing evils, such as intemperance, Sabbath-desecration, or profane swearing—should they endeavor to arrest the career of a nation's wickedness, and save it from the disorganizing principles of a lawless infidelity and an unbridled licentiousness, and avert the wrathful judgments of the Governor of the universe; they are charged with doing from the worst, what is done from the purest motives. They are turning the world upside down; uniting Church and State; aiming at the subversion of the liberties of the people; striving to re-establish the dominion of priest-craft! And every member of the Church who stands up to his work, must come in for his share of the reproach.

Sometimes the Christian has to encounter the hatred and reproach of near relatives and intimate friends, for the cause of Christ. This is a most trying cross. The hatred and reproach of the meanest are unpleasant. To a mild and pacific spirit, (and such, pre-eminently, is the Christian spirit,) the ill-will of the lowest and remotest of the human race, is very undesirable;

but when it comes home to the circle of our daily intercourse — of our family connection — and especially of our domestic group, it is torturing, and calculated to put our faith to the most trying test. In such cases, often, not only are the most tender affections of the heart assailed, but the opposition is fiercer, more unrestrained, and more implacable. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city." In many ages, as our Saviour foretold, the brother has delivered up the brother to death, and the father the child, and children their parents. Though, happily, in our country, the law protects from violence, and scenes of this character can not occur, the wrath and objurgation of near friends, on account of religion, have to be met, with sufficient frequency to remind us that the law of Christ is still applicable and worthy of the consideration of his disciples: "If any man come to me, and hate not, (that is, love less than me,) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple."

Sects and parties in the Church; selfish, perverse, contentious, untractable brethren; brethren prone to envy, jealousy, suspicion, evil-surmisings, and evil-speakings; brethren prone to anger, and subject to various infirmities and unlovely eccentricities, are also a source of no little inconvenience and trial to the Christian in his profession. It must needs be that offenses come. There necessarily is imperfection in the Church, and with that imperfection, much that is annoying and trying. Besides that bad men, self-deceivers, and hypocrites find their way into the visible Church, the best of men have their infirmities; and every man who joins the Church, however sincere and excellent, should bear in mind, that whatever good he may, by the grace of God, bring into the Church with him, he yet contributes his quota to the common stock of infirmities therein; and should lay out his accounts to meet with trials of his faith and patience, even in his intercourse with those who are holy brethren and partakers of the heavenly calling. And in the trials and difficulties, the

contentions, strifes, and divisions, the dishonors and reverses of the Church, as well as in the backslidings, falls, and apostasies of her members, he must expect to take a painful interest, and meet with what is afflictive and grievous.

The Christian, in maintaining his profession, is often obliged, by a sense of duty, to take an unpopular stand—not only unpopular with the world, but unpopular with brethren of a time-serving and worldly spirit, and with those, (and they are a very large portion of men in every community,) who do not take the trouble to think, but passively glide on in the current of popular opinion. When the reflecting Christian is constrained to take such a stand, he may expect opposition, not only from the world, but from brethren. He may find himself misunderstood and misrepresented, and charged with folly, and assailed with raillery, sneers, and reproaches, by brethren. In his efforts to do good, to oppose popular errors, and fashionable sins, and sinful amusements, or to awaken interest and to rouse to action in some important enterprise—perhaps of vital interest to the

Redeemer's cause—he may find that he has to contend with the passions, prejudices, and selfish interests of brethren, as well as of other men, and to deplore that he is baffled and disappointed by those who should have been helpers. And, covered with ill-will, derision and abuse, grieved and vexed, his only relief may be in commending his cause to God, under the testimony of a good conscience, and the assurance of divine approval.

To all this I will briefly add, that the Christian, in maintaining his profession, has to contend with the temptations of Satan. Many will tell you with a sneer and a look of superior wisdom, that there is no Devil—no tempter but a man's own heart. But they have never learned to talk so from the Bible. How will such explain Christ's temptations, who had no sinful heart to tempt him? How did Christ, consistently with the principle that there is no personal Devil, address the Jews in such language as the following: "Ye are of your father the Devil; and the works of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in

the truth; because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it?" And how do the apostles tell us of "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ruleth in the children of disobedience" — "the god of this world, who hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of God should shine into them!" How do they express their fears, lest "Satan should get the advantage" over us — lest, as "he beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so our minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"—and their hopes, that the Lord Jesus will bruise him under our feet shortly! How do they warn, "Be sober; be vigilant; for your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour!" "Put on the whole armor of God—for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers—against the rulers of the darkness of this world—against spiritual wickedness in high places."

No! there is a Devil, and that devil is a

tempter, and a bitter and uncompromising enemy to the Christian profession — full of devices, powerful, furious, sleepless and untiring—and supported by legions as malignant as himself. He delights to assail the Christian with his fiery darts. He avails himself of all the advantages furnished him by our indwelling depravity, and by all that is tempting and ensnaring in the world. He takes advantage of our circumstances, and of surrounding temptations, to excite our appetites and inflame our passions. He suggests impure, debasing, blasphemous thoughts, skeptical doubts, rebellious feelings. He strives to draw away and distract the mind in devotional exercises; to stir up doubts and fears, awaken dreadful apprehensions, and lead us to despair; and at other times prompts to pride, self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-sufficiency, and carnal security. He often suggests low thoughts of God; hard thoughts of his providence; mistrust in his Word, and objections to its truths; many sinful expedients; worldly, carnal, vexing and distracting thoughts; and even, at times, desperate purposes. He

is the more dangerous enemy, because unseen; and never is he better pleased than when he gets men to deny his existence and influence. He seeks the ruin of all men, but he owes a grudge to every man who openly espouses the cause of Christ — and will throw all possible difficulties in the way of his profession.

My friend, in reviewing the duties and trials of this profession, you may be ready to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But let me direct you to the assurance of the Saviour, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Take the Lord Jesus at his word. Be encouraged to enter and continue the conflict. Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. He will support and reward you. If you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him. Know whom you have believed, and cherish the persuasion that he is able to keep that which you have committed to him, *to that day.*

But rest not in an inactive profession; one which is attended with no trials, no difficulties, no conflicts; one in which the professor is at

ease in Zion. Oh! how did the Apostle weep over such! "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." To be carnally-minded is death! He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.

In my next, I will endeavor to guide your mind to the supports and consolations of this profession.

Yours,

LETTER XIII.

THE SUPPORTS AND CONSOLATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

My Dear Friend:—

The Christian Profession has its trials, but it also has its blessedness. It has its labors, its toils, its conflicts; but it has also its rest. It has its cross; but it has also its crown. That Saviour who so honestly warned the multitudes of self-denial, and hardship, and suffering, in his service, encouraged them also with the most affectionate assurances of rest and peace: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

But it is not a merely nominal profession to which this promise is given; but a profession, which proceeds from a true and living faith—that faith which really comes to Christ as a Saviour, teaches us our obligations to him, works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world, and leads us to conduct ourselves as the disciples and subjects of the Redeemer.

This is the profession of whose duties, necessity and trials, I have treated; and there is no true consolation in any other.

The word of God speaks not one word of peace to the merely nominal professor. On the contrary, it denounces his way as hard, and proclaims his end destruction: "Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones; strip ye, and make ye bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins." "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with the mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; therefore, behold I will proceed to do a

marvelous work among this people, a marvellous work and a wonder." It is a marvelous work and a wonder in the way of judgment. The wrath of God will be insupportable on all impenitent sinners; but it will be tremendously so on hypocritical and false professors. Insomuch that amid all the displays of his omnipotent vengeance, *their* destruction will excite the astonishment of the wonder-stricken universe. God's providential government of the world portends as much. On no nation did he pour such terrible wrath for their sins as he did on his covenant people. It would seem from the words of the Saviour, that there is a special place in hell for the torment of hypocrites: "The Lord of that servant, shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The Christian Profession is regarded by many as a gloomy thing—a tissue of awful duties, and disagreeable self-denials, and somber thoughts, and doleful feelings, without any enjoyment. And it is true, that it has its solemn duties and responsibilities, its self-denials disagreeable to

flesh and blood, and its serious thoughts and feelings; but it has also its consolations and its blessedness — consolations and a blessedness inconceivably superior to those of earth. In wearing the Saviour's yoke a man finds rest — rest to his soul.

I wish now to place before you some of these considerations, which support and console the Christian, and render him happy, amidst all the toils and trials of his profession.

I. And here I would name first, *The evidence which his profession gives of his acceptance in Christ.* With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Men may falsely profess religion, yet it is only in the way of making this profession that they can have evidence of their acceptance in Christ. In no other way can they have evidence that their faith and repentance are sincere. While they neglect this profession, the question of their union to Christ, and of their being partakers of his saving grace, must at least be involved in doubt, if not absolutely decided in the negative. But when a

man sincerely makes this profession, he adopts the very means which the Saviour appoints to attest the sincerity of his faith and the reality of his union to himself. He thereby publicly and formally identifies himself with the Lord Jesus as his Saviour and King — publicly and solemnly joins himself to the Lord in a covenant well-ordered in all things and sure, and that shall never be broken nor forgotten. The baptism he receives is "unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace — of his ingrafting into Christ — of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life." The bread and the wine — the communion of the body and blood of the Saviour — are a seal of the benefits of his sacrifice to his spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, and a bond and pledge of communion with the Saviour. In the very act, he engages to be the Lord's, gives himself away to the Saviour, feeds upon him by faith, lays hold on his righteousness and grace, on pardon and eternal life; and doing so, he experiences the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is

pardoned and whose sin is covered — finds peace with God, obtains boldness of access, has the testimony of the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is born again, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. A feeling of identification with the Saviour takes possession of his soul, he is in a new world, has taken citizenship in the commonwealth of Israel, and membership in the family of God; he stands in new relations to God, and to the universe — all things are his, and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.

This sense of acceptance and hope of salvation in Christ, which attends a public consecration of oneself to the Saviour, the true Christian would not exchange for ten thousand worlds. As a formal question, he may not be able to decide the matter of his acceptance as a thing past all doubt and peradventure, yet in the very sealing of his faith by his profession, there is the peace and joy of believing — a peace that passeth all understanding, a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

To this peace and joy the man who refuses to confess Christ must forever remain a stranger.

II. The authority and approval of God, the very nature of the duties implied, and the claims and love of the Saviour, make the Christian Profession a *reasonable and delightful service.*

The Christian in this profession only takes upon him a yoke which he can not refuse without the greatest guilt, and submits to a Friend whose sovereignty he can not reject without the blackest ingratitude. He pursues a course in which he will most certainly meet with the divine approval, and out of which he would just as certainly incur the divine wrath. God has said of his Son, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion;" and the decree is gone forth that "every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;" and with the decree goes forth the proclamation, "Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." The Father considers himself dishonored by every refusal to do homage to his Son; and whoso refuses to obey and serve him — be it nation, kingdom, or individual — shall perish.

God can easily render happy those who submit, and miserable those who do not.

Nothing can be more reasonable than the requirements of the Christian Profession. The law of Christ our King is just the law of our Maker, "holy, just and good" — founded in our relations and adapted to the constitution of our natures — suited to our new circumstances as under a dispensation of mercy, and enforced by delightful sanctions. What does He require of us but to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves? What, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God? It is true that he requires of all his subjects repentance for all their sins. But, is not this a reasonable service, due from offending creatures to their Creator, and is it not implied in their return to obedience? He also requires of them an habitual and implicit confidence in himself, as the Captain of their Salvation, and a humble reliance on his merits and grace. But does he not deserve this confidence? Can anything be more reasonable than that creatures

destitute of merit and resources of their own should rely on the merits and grace of a surety and a Saviour so worthy and so mighty? And should they not count it a privilege, an acknowledgment, and a service, to be rendered with gratitude and joy? He requires of his subjects to exercise the mild and placid virtues of love, good-will, kindness, compassion, meekness, gentleness, forbearance and forgiveness. And is there not a blissfulness in the very play of these affections, in witnessing their benign effects, and in receiving back the grateful reciprocations of them from our fellow men? while the very exercise, and effects, and returns of the contrary passions — fierce, turbulent, and malign — are a spring of inward torture and anguish. Christ also requires us to set our affections on things above and not on things beneath, and to lay up our treasures in heaven. And do they not possess a decided advantage, who are thus elevated above the reach of earthly calamities? He also enjoins us to keep his ordinances, and wait upon him in reading and hearing his word, in prayer and the sacraments. But these are the means

which he uses to bless his subjects, and to perfect and prepare them for heaven, by rendering them conformable to that just, holy and good law, to which all should be subject and by which all shall be judged.

But when we consider what the King of Zion is to his subjects; what he has done and is doing for them; the obligations under which he lays them, the claims he has on their love and obedience, verily his commandments cannot be grievous. His yoke is lined with love. It is the government of our best friend: that friend who died for us—the just for the unjust—that he might bring us to God. His love may well constrain our obedience, and his mercies prompt us to present our bodies, willingly, a living sacrifice. The love that prompted him to lay down his life for his subjects, prompts him to stand by and sustain them in all their duties and trials, and, in the end, crown them with a great reward. We serve a benefactor with pleasure, and it is a gratification to do for him what would be even a burden if done for another. But such a benefactor! Can his yoke be any-

thing else but easy; and his burden anything else but light!

III. The trials of the Christian Profession, which render it so formidable to flesh and blood, are in reality, after all, light, short, honorable, and in their issue, glorious.

They are light in comparison with what the Saviour has endured for his people, and with the weight of glory which they are to receive; and light, in comparison with what they deserve and with what they shall bear, if they refuse his service. What are inward conflicts, what are temptations, reproaches and persecutions—counterbalanced as they are with the favor and peace of God—in comparison with the horrors of that state where God has cast off forever, and clean forgotten to be gracious, and in the heat of his wrath has shut up his tender mercies?

These trials are short, in comparison with that endless woe that awaits the enemies of Jesus, and with that eternal happiness, which is held in reversion for those who serve him and suffer for his sake. "These light afflictions are but for a moment"—"and the suffering of this present

time is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

These trials are honorable. Suffering for Christ's sake, we suffer in the best cause and in the best company; the cause of truth, and holiness, and mercy; a cause deeply interesting to the rational universe, dear to the heart of God, and intimately connected with the glory of his great name. The company in which we suffer, is that of Jesus Christ himself, the chief and the brightest of martyrs, and that of holy apostles and prophets, and myriads of others, of whom the world was not worthy. It is an honor and a joy to suffer with such; "Blessed are ye," says the Saviour, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake! Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

These trials are glorious in their issue. If we suffer with Jesus, we shall reign with him. He pronounces all his suffering servants blessed, and exhorts them to rejoice and be exceeding

glad, for great is their reward in heaven. "Be faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life!" "Our light afflictions, which endure but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Follow the tempted, suffering, reproached and persecuted subjects of Christ into the eternal world; compare their condition there with their present circumstances, and with the wretched state of those who have rejected the yoke of Jesus; and stumble no longer at the trials of the Christian Profession. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains

of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

With this view of the comparative lightness, short continuance, honorableness, and glorious issue of the trials of his profession, the Christian may well "gird up the loins of his mind, and be sober, and hope to the end for the grace which shall be brought unto him at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

My friend, with these considerations I leave you for the present, hoping in my next to present you others no less encouraging. In the mean time weigh those presented, prayerfully; and if you have never yet taken upon you the yoke of Jesus, be encouraged to take it; and if you have, be emboldened in your profession.

Yours,

LETTER XIV.

THE SUPPORTS AND CONSOLATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

[Conclusion.]

My Dear Friend:—

It was no vain assurance which Jesus gave, when he said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." In my last your attention was turned to several considerations, showing, that the yoke of Jesus is easy, and his burden light. In this Letter I shall present a few additional considerations on this point, and then close the whole subject of these Letters. And,

IV. My fourth consideration is, That the true

follower of Christ, has the assurance of support in all his duties and trials, so that he shall be enabled to perform the one with acceptance, and endure the other with triumph. The assurance of success renders the most difficult undertakings easy, and the most weighty burdens light. It matters not how arduous our duties, if our strength be adequate for them. It matters not what our Master lays upon us, if he makes us able to bear it; nor what our difficulties and trials; if He go along with us, and help and strengthen, and defend and uphold us, and never leave nor forsake us until we get safely and honorably through. Nay, the greater the labor and the more severe the trial, and the more formidable the danger; the more honorable the success, the nobler the triumph, and the sweeter the rest. Hence, every generous mind loves great and difficult undertakings, where there is a probability of success; and the mind loves to dwell on, and the tongue to recite, whatever in labor and suffering was great and painful.

Well, the King of Zion calls his subjects to difficult duties and painful trials, in subduing

the flesh, the devil, and the world. But his grace is sufficient for them, and his strength is made perfect in their weakness. He never leaves them nor forsakes them. He vouchsafes his presence to cheer and animate them, and his assistance to strengthen and uphold. As their day, so shall their strength be. His language is, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Then is it their privilege to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Their faith and their cause link them in with Omnipotence, and enable them to draw on its resources. They can say, "Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." They can do all things through Christ who strengthened them. If pressed down by the weight of their afflictions and labors, they can hear him saying, "Cast thy burden on the Lord; he shall sustain thee." If dispirited by their weakness or fewness, their despised and forsaken lot, or their apparent want of success, he is near,

and says, "Lo, I am with you always — I am in the midst of you to bless you." If, under the annoying presence and distressing prevalence of indwelling sin, they are ready to cry, like one chained to a dead body, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" — the assurance of deliverance enables them to shout, "Thanks unto God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ!"

In the face of infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake, they can say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." And passing through them, though forsaken by earthly friends, and stripped of earthly resources, still may they sing, "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou holdest me by the right hand; I shall never be moved; thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Though I fall, I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art

with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

The Lord Jesus proportions his consolations and strength to the trials and labors of his subjects. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ."

In consideration of this support, what is there to hinder any subject of Zion's King from saying with the apostle, "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

V. Being found in the way of Christ's commandments and ordinances, and honestly endeavoring to keep them — and being, at the same time, a subject of his kingdom, and a member of the household of faith, the professing Christian has a right to the privileges and blessings of that kingdom and household — a most perfect and absolute claim on the fulfillment of all Christ's promises, and is warranted to put in that claim with boldness at a throne

of grace. The privilege of drawing near, in every situation, to a prayer-hearing God, with the hope and assurance of being answered in mercy and grace, is a privilege full of comfort and relief. But that man can not do so without presumption, who endeavors not to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of God blameless. Oh! it was a solemn and a fearful truth uttered by the Psalmist, when he said, "If I regard sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." That man who draws near to our holy Lord God, allowing himself in any one known sin, or in the neglect of any one known duty, is a mocking hypocrite. He must be sadly deceived, if his own conscience does not condemn him; and he certainly can not plead the promises in the assurance of faith. Secret misgivings will intrude in his presumptuous approaches; and terrible is the thought, that, if a man's own heart condemn him, God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things.

It is then an obvious truth, that that man takes an unwarranted freedom, who asks for the blessings, the help, the support and pro-

tection of Christ's kingdom and household, who at the same time refuses to take his yoke upon him and to submit to the government of his house and kingdom. It is daring presumption, as well as a gross inconsistency, for him to say to the world by his conduct, "I am not of Christ's family and kingdom" and yet ask of God the privileges and blessings which belong exclusively to that kingdom and family, and are promised only to its members.

But the honest Christian professor belongs to this kingdom and family. He is the very man who does not regard sin in his heart, but who strives to walk in all the ordinances of God blameless — the very man to whom the promises are made, and who can draw near with a true heart and in the full assurance of faith, with pure conscience and clean hands, whose prayer the Lord will not turn away, and from whom he will withhold no good thing. His is all the blessedness of the privilege which the apostle sets forth in the following words: "Seeing then that we have so great a High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son

of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high-priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Here the Christian may dismiss all his anxieties, and forget all his afflictions and troubles, and trusting in God, commit to him his way, and cast on him the whole burden of his cares. "My times are in thy hand." "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word; in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do to me." "Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though

the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." "Be careful for nothing, but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Finally; the result—the combined effect—of all that is embraced in the Christian Profession, is, in many ways, peace and blessedness. This is evidently taught by the Saviour when he said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Mark to whom the Saviour made this promise: it was to his disciples. Mark, also, the conditions on which it rests.

They are presented in what our Saviour had said immediately before: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." It is, then, to the disciple of Jesus—the man that loves him and keeps his commandments—that this peace is promised; and it flows from the keeping of the Saviour's words, or rather, from that fellowship with the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ, which is enjoyed in and through the keeping of the Saviour's words. "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy; and upon the Israel of God."

In the very act of affectionately obeying Christ, and confessing his name, and wearing his yoke — in the very performance of the duties and exercise of the graces of this profession—in that sense of acceptance, and that

experience of divine supports, which the Christian enjoys—in that pleading of the promises, and that waiting upon God in the ordinances of his grace—that diligent pursuit of holiness—those outgoings of the affections to God—that careful observance of his law—that practice of righteousness—that walking with God—that growth in grace—those labors of love, and that patience of hope: in all these things is peace; peace with God; peace of conscience; peace in all the feelings of the soul; peace in the concerns and relations of life; the peace of assurance, and hope, and joy. "The work of righteousness is peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." It is in the exercise of the graces, and in the performance of the duties of the Christian profession, that "the spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And, if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ!" It is in the exercise of these graces, and the performance of these duties, that the Christian can look with contempt on the reproaches, misrepresentations,

and impugnings of men, and say, "My rejoicing is this: the testimony of my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have my conversation in the world."

And while the Christian conscientiously wears the Redeemer's yoke, cultivating the graces and duties of his profession, it is his privilege, in the midst of infirmities, sins, and shortcomings, to draw consolation from the gracious truth, (ministering consolation only to the conscientious followers of Christ): "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ, the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins;" and, notwithstanding his infirmities and shortcomings, to enjoy still the assurance of God's love, and entertain still that hope which maketh not ashamed; that hope, which, fixing on the rock Jesus, fast by the throne of God, is an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast.

Thus the flesh is mortified with the affections and lusts; and the war of conflicting and unhallowed passions ends in peaceful triumphs of heavenly affections. And the Christian rises

above the calamities, and cares, and strifes of life; buries his selfishness and resentments in good-will to men, and in doing good; and loses his cares, and anxieties, and vexing thoughts, in peaceful resignation to his heavenly Father's will, and in the brightening hope of heaven.

Surely, all this will have a happy influence in preparing him for the momentous events of death and judgment. And it is on the bed of death—it is amid the solemnities of judgment —it is in the realities of the eternal world, that we shall have the fullest manifestations of the blessedness of the Christian Profession.

And now, my dear Friend, I must bring these letters to a close. And, in conclusion, permit me to entreat you to consider prayerfully, in the fear of God, and in the light of eternity, that profession, the nature, duties, importance, trials, supports, and rewards of which I have endeavored to set before you. And be entreated, by the mercies of God, to present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to the world,

but be transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove experimentally what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

If you have never made this profession, delay it no longer. No longer regard it with indifference; no longer make yourself easy in the neglect of it by those excuses in which you have hitherto rested. They will be of no avail in the day in which God shall take away your soul, and call you to stand at his judgment bar. And you know not the day nor the hour of this fearful summons. The rejection of the Christian Profession is the rejection of Christ; and long before your summons into the eternal world, the Holy Spirit, grieved by your course, may abandon you forever. The longer you delay, the greater will be the difficulty, and the weaker will you be to surmount it. Rest not, then, in the delusive hope, that you will find a more convenient season—that, after you reach more mature years—at least, in the decline of life—at farthest, in old age—you will take your stand as a Christian. Beside the baseness of putting the Saviour off with the refuse

of your existence — the feeble services of a spent constitution, worn out in the service of the world—beside the baseness of such a purpose, the hope is utterly delusive. Those years may never come; or, if they do, increased cares and responsibilities, habits confirmed in worldliness and indifference as to the claims of the soul; habits of prayerlessness and sin; habits of neglect of duty; worldly connections, enfeebled powers, and a thousand other things, may have placed you at a hopeless distance from the kingdom of God, and the Holy Spirit have left you, under the fearful sentence, HE IS JOINED TO HIS IDOLS; LET HIM ALONE. Few men, living under the sound of the Gospel, ever join the Church after the meridian of life.

If you have made this profession—then be stimulated to the practice of its duties, and to the practical proof of its consolations and blessedness. Be not conformed to the world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. Put off con-

cerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Prove yourself whether you are in the faith; and be not content with present attainments; but forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Be not comparing yourself with others, and contenting yourself with the average of the amount of piety in the Church; but try yourself by the law of Christ, by his example, and the example of his holy apostles. Let the graces of the Christian Profession be in you and abound; so that you may be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Remember, none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether we live, we live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die to the Lord; whether, therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died,

and rose, and lives a new and glorious life in heaven, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. We are not our own; but are bought with a price, and bound to glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are his. There is no reason why we should not be as devoted in our profession as was the Apostle Paul.

This profession is bound upon us by every consideration—by the authority of God; by the love of the Saviour; by its intrinsic excellence; by the interests of truth and righteousness; by all that is precious in our own immortal souls; by the interests of the souls of others; by the well-being of universal humanity; by the example of the worthies of every age; by the claims of eternity.

It can not be slighted, neglected, or regarded with indifference, or dishonored by unbecoming deportment in it, without fearful peril. The rejection of its claims and obligations proves the heart to be in a state of desperate revolt against God—and woe to him who contends with his Maker!

A ruinous unbelief lies at the foundation of

all indifference to this profession, and of all neglect of its duties; and when we consider the issues pending, we may well wake up to the trumpet warning of the Apostle: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God!" This is the root at which we must strike! A growing indifference to the Christian Profession, tends to open infidelity, and total apostasy from God.

Disqualification for membership in the Church, is disqualification for heaven. The New Testament Church visible is called "the kingdom of Heaven." It is that kingdom which the "God of heaven" has set up. Its principles are heavenly and eternal—"righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"—the same with the principles of the kingdom as it is in heaven, and will be to all eternity; only here imperfectly, there perfectly developed. Hence the Apostle calls it a "kingdom which can not be moved." The Jewish dispensation was taken down; other systems shall be shaken and removed; but this can not be shaken, and shall

remain. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the things which are therein, shall be burnt up; but this kingdom shall stand. Freed from its present imperfections, and with its Divine and eternal principles fully developed, it shall appear and live forever in glory. Hence the Apostle, writing to the Hebrew Christians, speaking of their present church state, speaks of it in terms applicable to heaven: "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and unto an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The Church of God on earth, then, being in its principles identical with the Church above, is one kingdom with it; the same kingdom, only in a different form as to its external administration; and being the same in

principle, takes the same name, "*the kingdom of Heaven.*" The true members of it are animated by the same principles which animate the members of the Church above; only the former are yet imperfectly under their power — the latter perfectly. It is ONE family, part in heaven, part on earth: "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The Church on earth, then, being essentially one, in all its radical principles, with the Church above, and being with it called "the kingdom of Heaven," a refusal to belong to it, is virtually a repudiation of heaven, and apostasy from it, an abandonment of heaven.

As yet, the Church of God is in a comparatively humble and obscure condition, and there is little that is attractive in her position. The majority of this world, and especially of its wealth and distinction, declines her profession; and much of it is decidedly hostile to it. But it shall not be always so. The Christian profession is destined to become—and at no distant day—the profession of earth, the glory

and boast of all lands. "The mountain of the Lord's house, shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Zion shall arise and shine, because her light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon her, and the nations shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising. Unto Zion's King there is given a dominion, and a glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him—an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed. Avowed subjection to Christ, and the observance of his institutions and laws, will be the rule of earth—and the neglect of the Christian Profession, the exception.

But let us ascend higher. A glorious denouement awaits the Church of God. This profession is to shine in the splendors of its own heaven to which it belongs: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new

Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in nowise

enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and *His name shall be in their foreheads.* And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever.'"

Such is the future glory of the Church, and of its true members. In that glory, my dear friend, may you participate. But remember that it is written, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Yours,

THE END.

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